

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
COMMON COUNCIL  
November 13, 2023**

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer met on November 13, 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 Doug Harris with the Brookside Church 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; 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; Harley Tomlinson with the Rensselaer Republican. Project Coordinator Jerry Lockridge and Gas Supt. Carol Lockridge were absent.

Also in attendance were: Robert Schenk with Rensselaer Adventures, Garrett Welker, Jeff Rayburn, Alex Hilt with Baker Tilly, Angie Haun and Jeff Phillips.

The minutes of the October 23, 2023 regular council meeting were presented. There was a motion by Overton, second by Watson, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**Citizen Comments and Petitions:** There were none.

**Ordinance 21-2023, Zoning Ordinance Amendment:** Ahler said last meeting there was a concern with Section 2, Subsection 12 within the zoning ordinance. Proper procedure would be to make a motion to strike the language from the proposed ordinance and have the Plan Commission approve the Council's amendment. If approved by the PC then it would be returned to Council for adoption. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Cover, to remove section 2, subsection 12 of the proposed zoning ordinance and send it back to the Plan Commission with that correction. The motion passed unanimously.

**Resolution 46-2023, Gas Tracker:** Haun stated the gas tracker reflects a 46¢ decrease per 100 cubic feet. There was a motion by Arnold, second by Overton, to approve the resolution. The motion passed unanimously.

**Utility Financial Reporting and Budgeting Presentation:** Alex Hilt, with Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors, gave a brief overview of the financial management reports that were sent out in June regarding each utility. Arnold asked what benefits the city could see from a day-to-day operational standpoint. Hilt said benefits would be capital planning and being proactive with planning large expenditures, in addition to being more aware of what money is being spent on. Arnold asked if there is interest in implementing budgets, what would that timeline look like. Hilt said now is perfect timing and it could be done before the end of the year. A budget committee for utilities was decided on with Arnold, Watson, Keys and Smart serving on it.

**Alley Closure Request:** Davis brought up the possibility of closing the remainder of the alley that was closed earlier this summer located in the South 100 Block between Van Rensselaer and Front Street. There are many businesses with storefronts along this alley that still have their electric and gas meters located inside their building. This is a major building safety issue and will potentially put our emergency responders at risk in the event of a fire. Due to the alley's narrow width, the utilities had been forced to locate these meters inside to protect them from vehicles traversing the alley. Fenwick's and Cup of Joy have been talked to about the possibility of the alley closure, the new owners of Steffen's have not. Fenwick's and Cup of Joy don't have a problem with it. Weishaar brought up the possibility of the old City Office and Pub building being sold, and how the alley closure could possibly affect a new business trying to get supplies dropped off. She doesn't want the alley closure to hinder how current businesses are operating. Watson asked if it was possible to set up a mock test and see how it works. Weishaar said a letter should be sent to all affected businesses notifying them of the possibility of the alley being closed. They can either submit a signed letter back with their approval, or come to the next council meeting and be given the opportunity to discuss why it shouldn't be closed. Davis will work on getting letters sent out.

**Purchase of a Tractor for Street Department:** Black said the John Deere tractor that is currently in use has needed repairs multiple times. He provided a quote from Claussen's Equipment for the amount of \$25,591.00 for a mid-size tractor. The trade-in for the John Deere is \$6,691.00, making the total \$18,900.00. There was a motion by Arnold, second by Overton, to approve the quote from Claussen's Equipment in the amount of \$18,900.00 with a trade-in. The motion passed unanimously.

**WTH Technologies Proposal for Mobile Solution:** Black said this is to create a mobile map for utility employees to utilize from a tablet or smart phone while in the field. They just finished an inventory of the system, and this is the next step. The cost is \$6,900 for 10 subscriptions, which would be \$1,380 from each utility. After the first year, it is \$2,400.00 annually. Arnold asked how updates are going to be integrated in the system. Black said you can flag updates in the field and go back and make the changes on the computer. Arnold asked if this was an app on a mobile phone. Black said yes. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to approve the proposal. The motion passed unanimously.

**Appointment of School Board Member:** Cover said there was a resignation by a city appointed school board member. The city is seeking an individual to fill the position until the end of the term, which is June 30, 2024. The city will be taking applications until December 4<sup>th</sup>.



**Meeting Date Change for December 25<sup>th</sup>:** Wood said currently the last meeting of the year falls on Christmas. There was a motion by Arnold, second by Overton, to change the last meeting date to December 26, 2023. The motion passed unanimously.

**Public Relations Request:** Smart requested \$200.00 from the public relations fund for candy and supplies for the Christmas parade on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. There was a motion by Cover, second by Weishaar, to approve the \$200.00 request. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval to Purchase Fire Department New Water Main:** Haun asked for approval to purchase a water main. He received two quotes. One from EJP for \$39,719.62 and one from Utility Supply Company for \$34,233.25. The funding is available within his fire budget and public safety budget. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to approve the quote from Utility Supply Company for \$34,233.25. The motion passed unanimously. Arnold said when others ask what the City has put toward this project, be sure to include that number.

**FMLA Request:** Wood said there was an FMLA request. There was a motion by Overton, second by Weishaar, to approve the request. The motion passed unanimously.

**Burial Rights Request:** Keys read a request for burial rights for Rodney Woolley and Regan Shaffer. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Arnold to approve the burial rights. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

**Front Street Property:** Ahler said we are waiting on a court date.

#### **Administrative Comments:**

**Weishaar** had nothing.

**Arnold** gave his appreciation to the Street Dept. for cleaning up leaves.

**Overton** had nothing.

**Wood** had nothing.

**Keys** had nothing.

**Watson** asked Larson if the meters were done. Larson said yes, the inventory asset management is done. Going to try and have everything uploaded to WTH this week. Watson asked if there are enough people trained on it and how many people he would be sending to training. Larson said two from the Electric Dept. and one from the Meter Dept. Watson agreed with Arnold's statement about the leaf pickup.

**Cover** had nothing.

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

#### **Superintendents Reports:**

**Police Dept:** Anderson said his newest hire will be graduation from the Academy on Friday.

**Law Dept:** Ahler had nothing.

**Utility Office:** Smart had nothing.

**Building Dept:** Davis said he would be brining up the alley vacation at the next council meeting.

**Fire Dept:** Haun said the Board of Public Works and Safety approved 3 new firefighter applications, bringing his roster to 25.

**Electric Dept:** Larson said he is still waiting on quotes for the digger truck and Christmas lights will be put up next week.


**Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewage:** Black said Weston St. is paved, the concrete has been poured for the phosphorous building, 102 lead line services have been replaced and there is one more service left. A total of \$2,000,040.00 has been spent on lead service lines.

**Cemetery Dept:** Baltes said the Veteran's Day celebration went well and they are getting ready for Wreaths Across America.

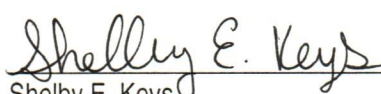
**Gas Dept:** C. Lockridge was absent.

**Park Dept:** Effinger said they have started decorating Milroy Park for the holidays and he would like to form a committee to start discussing getting a new Park's Dept. building.

There being nothing more to come before council, there was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

  
Stephen A. Wood, Mayor

Attest:

  
Shelby E. Keys  
Clerk-Treasurer