

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

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer met on December 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 with Hope Community 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, Electric Line Foreman Garrett Welker, Asst. Street Supt. Bryce Black, Project Coordinator Jerry Lockridge, Gas Supt. Carol Lockridge, Harley Tomlinson with the Rensselaer Republican. Electric Lead Line Foreman Lenny Larson and Utility Office Manager Heather Smart were absent.

Also in attendance were: Robert Schenk with Rensselaer Adventures, Jeff Phillips, Jeff Rayburn, Caleb DeJong, Danny Cawby, Tim Deno, Cody Heldak, Lydia Arnold, Angie Haun, Andy Nagel and Stace Pickering.

The minutes of the November 27, 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: Kenin Smith announced that the Rensselaer Area Ministerial Association will be hosting a Night of Peace at Hope Community Church on December 17th starting at 6:00 PM.

Public Hearing for Ordinance 25-2023, Partial Vacation of Cherry St: There was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to close the regular meeting and open the public hearing. The motion passed unanimously. Danny Cawby, acting manager for Genova Plastics, also known as the Richard N Reese Family, stated the company recently bought property next to the current facility. They would like the City to vacate the undeveloped portion of Cherry St that the property surrounds. Overton asked if they were expanding. Cawby said it will be used for parking and storage. A preliminary drainage plan has already been prepared and they are working with the city on all of the development requirements. Weishaar said this is where Cherry St. would extend, and asked if there were any current utilities. Ahler said no utilities, just the street. He also said the ordinance will need to be provided to the County Recorder's Office. J. Lockridge said future expansion of the city could go down Angelica St, which is one block south of Cherry St. With no further discussion from the Council or members of the public, there was a motion by Overton, second by Arnold, to close the public hearing and open the regular meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance 25-2023, Partial Vacation of Cherry St: Ahler said we just had the public hearing and this ordinance would be to vacate the undeveloped portion of Cherry St located to the east of the alley located east of 10th St. If the ordinance passes, it will need to be taken to the Recorder's Office. After a brief discussion to clarify the exact location of the vacation, there was a motion by Cover, second by Overton, to approve the ordinance. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 49-2023, Gas Tracker: C. Lockridge stated the gas tracker reflects a 5¢ decrease per 100 cubic feet. There was a motion by Arnold, second by Weishaar, to approve the resolution. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 50-2023, Transfer of Funds: Keys read requests for transfer of funds. Arnold said he spoke to the superintendents that requested transfers and he wanted it to be known that the Fire Department transfer of \$18,000.00 will go towards the fire training tower. There was a motion made by Arnold, second by Cover, to approve the resolution. The motion passed unanimously.

City Supply Bid Opening: Keys opened the bids and they are as follows:

Item #1, Unleaded Gasoline. Ceres Solution was the only bidder with a bid of \$2.008/gallon with an escalator clause. Item #2, Diesel Fuel. Ceres Solution was the only bidder with a bid of \$2.534/gallon and \$2.579/gallon for premium diesel fuel, both with an escalator clause.

The bids will be reviewed and a recommendation will be made at the next council meeting.

Limiting Access to Alley at South 100 Block of Van Rensselaer: Davis said he has reached out to businesses in the area. None had issues with limiting the alley access to foot traffic only. He has sent letters to property owners and hand delivered letters to the businesses. Davis also provided a video of a box truck being able to back up from Harrison St. through the city parking lot to make deliveries. Weishaar asked if any had objections. Davis said no. Watson asked if it's the owner's decision to move meters or the city's decision. Davis said currently it would be the owner's decision but the Council could always require it in the future. Watson asked if they have to cover the cost. Davis said yes. Cover asked if there will ever be a mandate that they must be moved outside and said the City should pay if we want them moved outside. Arnold stated he was in agreeance with Cover. C. Lockridge said from her perspective, she could see the State mandating that all gas meters need to be outside. Davis informed the Council that Indiana Code requires them to pass an ordinance to close the alley to vehicle traffic. Wood said this would be tabled for next meeting and added to old business.

Public Relations Fund Request: Weishaar requested up to \$350.00 for employee recognition. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to approve the request. The motion passed unanimously.

School Board Appointment: Cover said there was a vacancy on the school board that was appointed by the city. It will be a 6-month appointment. Five people applied and were interviewed. Watson commented that he believes City Council should not be appointing school board members. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to

nominate Nancy Souza for the school board appointment. Roll call vote: Weishaar-nay, Arnold-nay, Overton-yes, Watson-yes, Cover-yes. The motion passed with a 3-2 vote. A letter will be sent to all applicants to inform them of the decision.

OLD BUSINESS

Front Street Property: Ahler said a court date is set for January 12th at 11:30 AM in the Jasper County Circuit Court.

Committee Reports - Utility Budget Committee: Arnold said work is continuing. Smart said she's worked with Baker Tilly on reducing the line items within the chart of accounts.

Administrative Comments:

Cover told J. Lockridge to thank his employees for their hard work.

Watson had nothing.

Keys had nothing.

Wood had nothing.

Overton had nothing.

Arnold said he attended the Christmas luncheon and that it was a great opportunity to get everyone together. He thanked Angie Haun for her work in getting the party together and thanked Kenny Haun for allowing the fire house to be utilized. Arnold also said he received an email complaint regarding the open burning ordinance. He asked that Anderson and Haun review the ordinance to see if there are any changes that need made, as it was last updated in 2009.

Weishaar thanked everyone who participated in the Christmas parade. She also said there is a patch of road on College Ave. that is sinking and asked if it would be that way for winter. J. Lockridge said it would be taken care of this week.

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

Superintendents Reports:

Police Dept: Anderson said he is finishing up background investigations for the hiring of a new officer.

Law Dept: Wood questioned Ahler if a Redevelopment member could also serve on the Plan Commission. Ahler said he would look into it.

Utility Office: Smart was absent.

Building Dept: Davis said there is a Plan Commission and BZA meeting this week. There will be two rezone requests presented and a conditional use application.

Fire Dept: Haun said the department was awarded a Jaws of Life Green Cross award. The award ceremony will be December 28th at 6:00 PM at the fire house.

Electric Dept: Welker had nothing.

Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewage: Black said an apprentice passed the WT3 water treatment test and is now a fully certified operator. J. Lockridge said the lead service line replacement project has reached substantial completion, with 112 lines being replaced.

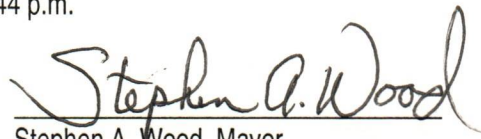
Cemetery Dept: Baltes said this Saturday is Wreaths Across America and 900 wreaths will be placed in Weston.

Gas Dept: C. Lockridge wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

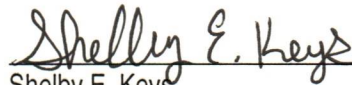
Park Dept: Effinger had nothing.

Mayor Wood gave a reminder about the last council meeting in December being held on the 26th.

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 6:44 p.m.


Stephen A. Wood, Mayor

Attest:



Shelby E. Keys
Clerk-Treasurer