

CITY OF OLNEY
EMERGENCY CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 16, 2020

AGENDA #1 “CALL TO ORDER” The March 16, 2020, emergency meeting of the Olney City Council was called to order at 11:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers of the Olney City Hall located at 300 S. Whittle Avenue, Olney, Illinois, with Mayor Mark Lambird presiding.

AGENDA #2 “PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG-PRAYER” Council members and visitors joined in the pledge of allegiance to the flag. Mayor Lambird led the group in prayer.

AGENDA #3 “ROLL CALL” The following Council members were present: Greg Eyer, Belinda Henton, John McLaughlin, and Mark Lambird. Morgan Fehrenbacher was absent. Also present were City Manager Allen Barker, City Clerk Kelsie Sterchi, City Treasurer Jane Guinn, and City Engineer Mike Bridges.

Mayor Lambird asked that if anyone present was from a local organization outside of the City to please identify themselves. The following people were present at the time of roll call: Sheriff Andrew Hires, Micah Drummond (RN, Richland County Health Office), Brian VanBlaricum (Richland County Board), Dennis Graves (Chair, Richland County Board), Bill Clow (Richland County Board), Alice Mullinax (Richland County Clerk), Jeff Gray (Richland County Deputy Coroner), Kevin Parker (Richland County Emergency Management Agency/Carle Richland Memorial Hospital Emergency Management Agency), Gina Thomas (Chief Nursing Officer, Carle Richland Memorial Hospital), and Harry Brockus (CEO, Carle Richland Memorial Hospital).

AGENDA #4 “PUBLIC COMMENTS/PRESENTATIONS” No one from the public wished to speak.

AGENDA #5 “DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION: POLICIES & PROCEDURES RELATED TO DIRECT PUBLIC TO EMPLOYEE CONTACT” Due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the City of Olney needed to make several decisions regarding the continuity of operations. Mayor Lambird advised that some other area utilities had shut down their lobbies to direct public to employee business. These utilities still had staff working in the office, and could assist customers by phone or e-mail, and could process transactions via other methods. After some discussion with City Hall staff, Mayor Lambird believed it would be prudent to limit access inside of City Hall until at least the end of the month.

Councilman McLaughlin wondered how the public would know how to ask questions. Mayor Lambird advised that contact information would be posted.

City Manager Barker asked how cash payments would be handled. Mrs. Sterchi replied that cash payments could be placed in the dropbox to the left of the front door to City Hall.

There would be no provision to make change, so any overpayments would be applied as a credit to the customer's account.

Councilwoman Henton added that there were other ways to make payments such as paying at local banks, paying electronically, etc.

Councilwoman Henton moved to close the City Hall lobby to the public, effective immediately through March 31, 2020, seconded by Councilman Eyer. Councilwoman Henton, Councilmen McLaughlin, Eyer, and Mayor Lambird voted yes. There were no opposing votes. The motion carried.

Mayor Lambird asked the Council if the Brush Dump should also be closed to the public. Councilmen Eyer and McLaughlin stated their opinions that the Brush Dump could continue its normal operation.

Mayor Lambird then asked if the Community Building should close to the public, and to cancel any reservations currently made at park facilities. He then read through a list of reservations on the books through the end of March. The Council was unsure.

Mayor Lambird asked the audience for recommendations from those in the health care field. From the audience, Ms. Drummond indicated that the CDC's current guidelines were to limit gatherings of 50 or more people for at least 8 weeks. Mr. Brockus added that if the reservations were not cancelled, the facilities would need to be cleaned thoroughly between each reservation.

Councilman McLaughlin moved to close rental of park facilities to the public until the end of the month, and to cancel current reservations through the end of the month, seconded by Councilman Eyer. A majority affirmative voice vote was received.

Mrs. Mullinax asked if using City Hall and the Fire Station as polling places for the next day's Primary Election would be a problem. Mayor Lambird surmised that it was getting to be too late in the day to cancel the Primary. Unless Governor Pritzker cancelled the Primary during his 2:30 p.m. press conference, the Mayor believed that the polling places would be operational.

Councilwoman Henton wondered if Mrs. Mullinax had enough people to efficiently work the election. Mrs. Mullinax admitted that election staff was spread thin, and that some precincts may need to combine.

After the polling places closed in the evening, Councilman McLaughlin wondered if the polling places would need to be thoroughly cleaned. Mr. Barker indicated so. The cleaning should also include kitchens and bathrooms.

Mr. Brockus felt that it should be considered to have voters screened before entering. Mrs. Mullinax stated that she did not have enough manpower to conduct screenings at the polling

places. She wondered if CRMH would have staff that could assist. Mr. Brockus replied that CRMH did not have enough staff to provide for this purpose.

Councilman McLaughlin felt that denying someone the right to vote probably would not work anyway. If anything, Mrs. Mullinax offered that if it appeared a voter had symptoms of COVID-19, he or she could be directed to the front of the line to reduce their time in the polling place. Election judges could also ask voters to spread out five to six feet away from one another.

Councilman McLaughlin asked if hand sanitizer and/or disinfecting wipes would be available at polling places. Mrs. Mullinax replied that she only had access to small containers of hand sanitizer. More hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes were currently unable to be found. However, she did have a product called Microban that could be used to spray and wipe down the polling places throughout the day.

Ms. Drummond indicated that the Richland County Health Office had about 12 bottles of hand sanitizer that they could provide for this purpose. Mrs. Mullinax thanked Ms. Drummond.

Councilwoman Henton wondered if masks would be available. Mr. Brockus stated that masks were in very short supply. He felt the most prudent thing to do was to ask people to be prudent themselves. If they were not feeling well, they should do the right thing and stay home.

RCDC Executive Director Courtney Yockey asked if the Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission's CEDS meeting that was scheduled for Wednesday at City Hall would still take place. Mayor Lambird indicated that after the election, access to City Hall would be completely shut down to non-employees.

AGENDA #6 "DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ORDINANCE: WAIVER OF LATE FEES AND/OR WATER DISCONNECTION DUE TO NON-PAYMENT" Mayor Lambird advised that the State of Illinois was recommending that utilities waive new late fees and disconnections due to non-payment through May 1, 2020.

Councilman McLaughlin moved to waive disconnection due to non-payment through May 1, 2020, and to waive April's late fees, seconded by Councilman Eyer. A majority affirmative voice vote was received.

AGENDA #7 "DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION: NON-ESSENTIAL TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES" Mayor Lambird recommended that all non-essential travel by City employees for City purposes be restricted through May 1, 2020.

Mr. Barker pointed out that some employees from the Sewer Department traveled on Monday evenings to mandatory trainings. The school providing the training had not yet cancelled the classes.

Mayor Lambird felt that many mandates would be loosened because of how different world circumstances were currently. He felt that the City needed to have its employees remain as healthy as possible.

Councilman McLaughlin deferred to the recommendation of the present health care representatives. Mrs. Thomas pointed out that many meetings and trainings were being done by Skype. She wondered if that could be an option, and advised to reach out to the school to see if that could be possible.

The Council had a question as to how missing a training or two may affect the Sewer Department employees. Mayor Lambird requested that Mr. Barker have the Sewer Department Supervisor come to the meeting to give some clarification.

Action on this topic was taken under Agenda #9.

AGENDA #8 “DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION: FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULES FOR REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE OLNEY CITY COUNCIL AND OTHER CITY BOARDS & COMMISSIONS” Mayor Lambird asked the Council if they felt that public meetings for March should be cancelled.

Councilmen Eyer and McLaughlin had no problem attending open meetings, and Councilman Eyer added his feeling that continuing with some sense of normalcy would be helpful.

The City Council only had one meeting remaining in March, and the topics did not seem to be pressing. Mrs. Guinn pointed out that discussions regarding the General Corporate 2020/2021 budget could take place on April 13, 2020, in conjunction with the public hearing for the 2020/2021 budget.

Councilwoman Henton moved to cancel all meeting schedules for the Olney City Council and other City boards and commissions through March 31, 2020, seconded by Councilman McLaughlin. A majority affirmative voice vote was received.

AGENDA #9 “DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION: LIQUOR LICENSE ESTABLISHMENT CLOSURES” Mayor Lambird explained that this topic was placed on the agenda before the Illinois Gaming Board mandated that gaming establishments also close, along with bars and restaurants. The mandate from the Governor also included private clubs. Liquor stores would remain open for now.

From the audience, Michelle Weiler asked how long restaurants were to remain closed to dine-in customers. Mayor Lambird replied that as it was, the mandate would be through March 31, 2020.

Mayor Lambird asked if the audience wished to address anything else.

Mr. Clow stated that the Illinois Commerce Commission had sent out an e-mail requesting that each County set up additional housing for “25.” He was not sure if that meant 25 houses or a single building that could hold 25 people. Mr. Clow requested use of the Community Building for such purpose because it had restrooms, showers, a kitchen, plenty of space, heating, air conditioning, and easy access.

Mr. Parker clarified that such housing would need to have individual bedrooms, and would need to have various ADA-compliant features. The housing unit should also have outside entrances, similar to the setup of older motels. However, if a group shelter was needed, Mr. Parker agreed that the Community Building would be sufficient.

Sewer Department Supervisor Jeff Lathrop arrived at 11:18 a.m. Mr. Barker asked him to explain the training situation. Mr. Lathrop stated that the school had not cancelled the training session for Monday evenings because it would be a gathering of only nine students.

Mayor Lambird asked if the training session could be done electronically. Mr. Lathrop was unsure.

Mayor Lambird then asked how many more training sessions would be needed. Mr. Lathrop replied that four more sessions were needed. Employees from Herrin, Mt. Carmel, Albion, and Carmi also attended.

Sheriff Hires felt that if the school was contacted by the City, and the City requested an extension, that could possibly help. Mr. Lathrop exited the meeting to make the phone call to the school at 11:25 a.m.

Mr. Barker pointed out that a police officer was still in training through the Police Academy. Deputy Police Chief Justin Bloomer had not heard that the Academy would be closing. He was aware that they had offered to have trainees stay on campus if they could pay \$25.00 to help with expenses. Detective Bloomer said that was never actually implemented.

The Council felt comfortable deferring to the Police Academy’s recommendations on any closures.

Councilman McLaughlin moved to restrict all non-essential travel for City employees, except for the officer at the Police Academy until May 1, 2020, seconded by Councilman Eyer. A majority affirmative voice vote was received.

Mrs. Mullinax said that the Richland County Highway Department was delivering and setting up necessary election equipment that would include City Hall and the Fire Station. She wondered if access to retrieve those items would be a problem. Mayor Lambird indicated that retrieval of those items would be fine.

Councilman McLaughlin asked how first responders were protecting themselves. Deputy Police Chief Bloomer stated that the Police Department did not have masks, but still had contraptions used when entering meth houses. The Department did not have N95 respirators.

Fire Chief Hill indicated that his Department had 10 appropriate masks in their mass casualty trailer. They also had 25 other masks and respirators, similar to SCBAs, but they would need canisters.

Sheriff Hires stated that his Department did not have masks, but did have some on order from IEMA. He had asked that officers save jail space. They did have the ability to do screening at the jail, and did have the ability to set up small quarantines. Visitations were still taking place because the interactions took place behind glass. The Sheriff was asking that those feeling sick not come to the jail. Cleaning and sanitizing efforts were also increasing inside of the lobby.

Mr. Clow added that Judge Dunn had stated that court would continue as scheduled.

Sheriff Hires then said that during election night on March 17, 2020, the courthouse would not be open to the public. Only a few, approved election staff and officials would be granted access. Watch parties would need to take place elsewhere.

Mayor Lambird then thanked everyone for attending, and cautioned all to be careful, think of their neighbors, and continue to say some good prayers each night.

AGENDA #10 “ADJOURN” Councilman McLaughlin moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Henton. A majority affirmative voice vote was received.

The special meeting of City Council adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

Kelsie J. Sterchi
City Clerk