

CITY OF OLNEY
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JANUARY 19, 2021

AGENDA #1 “CALL TO ORDER” The January 19, 2021, special meeting of the Olney City Council was called to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Fire Station Truck Bay located at 501 N. Walnut Street, 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 physically present: Greg Eyer, Morgan Fehrenbacher, Belinda Henton, and Mark Lambird. John McLaughlin was absent. Also physically present were City Manager Allen Barker, City Clerk Kelsie Sterchi, City Treasurer Jane Guinn, Code Enforcement Officer Dallas Colwell, Deputy Police Chief Justin Bloomer, Park/Water Plant Supervisor Frank Bradley, Street Department Supervisor Tyler Kocher, Water Distribution Department Supervisor Brandon Williams, City Mechanic Roger Fulk, and Sewer Plant Supervisor Jeff Lathrop. Interim Fire Chief Rusty Holmes entered later in the meeting. Attending by audio was City Attorney Bart Zuber.

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

AGENDA #5 “WORK SESSION: PRIORITIZE PROJECTS FOR COMING YEAR” Prior to the meeting, department heads and Council members submitted goals, equipment, and personnel needs to the City Manager. The items submitted were categorized on handout sheets and distributed to everyone in attendance. Also, everyone was given the five-year capital improvement plans for all departments.

All department heads and Council members were allowed to discuss and answer questions about their suggested goals, equipment and personnel needs.

The COVID-19 crisis that began last Spring provided many budgetary questions that could not be answered in regards to City revenue and how that may affect purchase needs and projects. Mayor Lambird was pleased that the pandemic had not negatively impacted the City too much. He then asked Mrs. Guinn to give a bit of a financial report.

Mrs. Guinn reported that Corporate Replacement Tax was down (\$20,000.00) from last year, but that was expected, and the decrease had been budgeted. Income Tax was up by about \$16,000.00. MFT was up by about \$2,200.00 but would eventually decrease due to the extra payment from the State.

Surprisingly, Sales Tax was up by \$20,000.00 compared to last year. Use Tax was up \$65,000.00. Telecommunications Tax continued to drop and was (\$14,000.00) less than the prior year. Again, that drop was expected and had been budgeted.

Another surprise was that Hotel/Motel Tax was only down by about (\$800.00) compared to the prior year. Video Gaming Tax was down by about (\$31,000.00) from the prior year due to the lengthy shut-downs of those establishments.

Electric Aggregation was up by \$500.00. The Cannabis Excise Tax had brought in \$5,000.00 with no such revenue received in the prior year.

Mr. Barker asked Mrs. Sterchi to begin. Mrs. Sterchi noted that she would technically have no proposed capital expenses for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. The reason for this was due to the change in the capital threshold amount from \$500.00 to \$5,000.00, effective as of the 2021-2022 fiscal year. She had no proposed single expenses that would total that much. Rather, the expenses that normally would have been found under her capital would be transferred and proposed in her Operating Supplies line item.

Upcoming projects in the City Clerk Department were to have additional and improved storage for records and to have bi-annual reviews of detailed City Clerk and Utility Clerk Manuals. It became even more apparent in the pandemic that having such available, detailed resources would be very helpful in helping cover various services in case an employee needed to be out for lengthy periods of time.

Needs in the City Clerk Department included a new computer for the Utility Clerk. These replacements were scheduled on a five-year cycle. Additionally, it was time to replace the City Clerk and Utility Clerk printers. The Utility Clerk printer was scheduled to be replaced in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, but had not been included in the budget due to the financial concerns related to COVID-19. The City Clerk printer replacement had always been scheduled for the 2021-2022 year, but due to the cut from last year, both printers were proposed for replacement in 2021-2022.

For Tourism, project goals included wrapping up the Walldogs project, and trying billboard placement in addition to promoting socially distanced get-a-ways and daytrips.

For needs in Tourism, it would be important for COVID-19 to no longer be a pandemic for tourism to bounce back. Additionally, Mrs. Sterchi felt it would be important to tourism to expand amenities on City lakes.

Mr. Barker was again requesting \$50,000.00 for contingencies that could be used across any department, if needed. Additionally, he hoped to see \$100,000.00 budgeted for enhancements to Main Street and Whittle Avenue.

Next, Mrs. Guinn stated that no capital expenses were requested in the Treasury Department for the new fiscal year. Instead, some projects would be of focus. Mrs. Guinn

wanted to explore electronic payment options for vendors in order to expedite payments and avoid late fees. Most recently, her department was having trouble with paper checks being received by vendors via mail. In addition, Mrs. Guinn hoped to continue training and explore Tyler Technologies' financial software applications.

Mr. Colwell also did not have any proposed capital items for the next fiscal year, but he did request an additional \$1,000.00 for unforeseen expenses. For projects in the Code Enforcement Department, Mr. Colwell planned to continue working on the demolition of dangerous structures. He also would be compiling an electronic listing of past building permits. This listing would be searchable by address and name.

Regarding City Hall Maintenance, Mr. Colwell hoped to improve security. A security door system had been installed and was working nicely. The next goal would be to install bulletproof glass for the front reception window. Bulletproof glass had been donated from an old bank building, but would need to be retrofitted for City Hall and then installed. Mr. Colwell expected the whole project could total about \$15,000.00. He noted that cutting bulletproof glass could be risky, but Bill's Machine Shop believed they could cut the glass with their water jet.

Additionally, Mr. Colwell hoped for \$500.00 to clean the carpet in the Council Chambers. He also wished to finish replacing ceiling tile in the Break Room and to fix the back entry door.

Councilwoman Fehrenbacher asked what could be done with the back entry door. Mr. Colwell replied that in the warmer weather, it had a problem with sticking and dragging paint. Mark Fessel had indicated that he could perform the repair at no cost.

Interim Fire Chief Rusty Holmes entered the meeting at 6:43 p.m.

Councilman Eyer recalled that roofing had been needed on the bays at City Hall. Mr. Colwell stated that the project had been pushed back three more years. A leak had been fixed in the bays and the drying tower was removed. Since then, the roofing appeared to be solid with no leaks.

Councilman Eyer then asked about the work that had been proposed for the City Hall parking lot. Mr. Colwell indicated that project had also been pushed out. He agreed that would be a beneficial project, but did not feel it was necessarily a necessity.

Deputy Police Chief Bloomer requested inclusion of \$57,500.00 for the purchase of a new squad vehicle with in-car camera and computer. It is best practice to also provide new in-car cameras and computers with new squads. If this is not done, maintenance issues would not fall far behind as this equipment had so many running hours.

The Police Department also needed some updated computers and software that would total about \$7,000.00. This estimate would allow for the purchase of three computers that were

purchased in 2016, 2017, and 2006. In anticipation of needing more cameras and more data storage in the future, Deputy Chief Bloomer wanted to upgrade the right way.

Lastly, the Police Department needed continued training for its officers.

Mr. Barker pointed out that a new squad vehicle with in-car camera and computer had been budgeted for the current fiscal year but had not yet been purchased. The new vehicle would retire a 2013 model with about 118,000 miles. It was also noted that if ordered, it would take the City about 5 months to actually receive the vehicle.

Mr. Fulk noted that sedan models were being done away with for squad vehicles. Dealers were selling their final sedans and SUV models would only be available moving forward. The price increase proposed for the next fiscal year was because the SUV models were also more expensive.

The Council agreed to discuss moving forward with the purchase of the budgeted police squad vehicle at its January 25, 2021, meeting.

For the Fire Department, Interim Fire Chief Holmes was requesting 10 sets of structural fire gear that would total about \$30,000.00. The Department would also need 8 air pack cylinders at \$7,160.00, and continued training for the firefighters.

Interim Fire Chief Holmes had also listed the need for some building improvements for the next fiscal year. No major upkeep projects would be needed on the building, but he did anticipate some maintenance needs.

In the City Park, Mr. Bradley wanted to finish Phase 3 of the project that would rip rap the City Park creek to Route 130. Phase 3 should cost about \$22,000.00. This project would need to be completed before the installation of the multi-use trail.

After much heated discussion among the public last year regarding the City Park fountain, it appeared that the current fountain would remain, but it needed repair estimated to come in at \$22,000.00. That price would include a new drain, floor, and extra epoxy for the rail. The price did not include any structure work to the walls or rails.

The Splash Pad Project for Musgrove Park was also expected to continue by utilizing funds donated from the community. Repair work to tennis courts #1, #2, and #3 were also requested at \$40,000.00.

Councilwoman Henton asked when repair work to the other tennis courts would take place. Mr. Bradley replied that was planned and outlined in his Five-Year Plan. Additionally, in the Spring, crack sealing would be done at a cost of \$10,000.00.

Councilwoman Fehrenbacher thought she had recalled a tennis group that had expressed interest in raising money to help repair the courts. Mr. Bradley believed that the Tennis

Association had planned on having a conversation with the school district on that topic, but he had not heard any updates.

Funds were budgeted in the current fiscal year that would allow the purchase of one more riding law mower. If not purchase this year, Mr. Bradley would be needing to purchase three in the next fiscal year. Depending on how many were purchased, the pricing could range between \$19,220.00 and \$28,800.00.

Lastly, the Park Department also requested the purchase of a half-ton pickup that would total about \$23,000.00. Unit #702 was in bad shape and needed to be retired. Mr. Fulk agreed that pickup was in poor condition.

Councilwoman Fehrenbacher asked how many phases would be included in the drainage ditch project at the City Park, and also wondered how much money had already been spent on that project. Mr. Bradley stated that there would be five phases. Mrs. Guinn reported that \$23,000.00 had been spent so far.

Mr. Kocher expected that the remainder of the project would not cost as much. He also pointed out that per permit restrictions, work could only be done at a maximum of 500-feet at a time, and that the price of rock was expected to increase by about \$1.00 per ton.

The culvert near the tennis courts also needed attention. The bottom part of the culvert had rotted out. The total to repair would be about \$40,000.00. Instead of total replacement, an option would also be to line the culvert. Lining should also allow for more water to flow and was also expected to cost about \$40,000.00.

Mr. Kocher also cautioned that if work on the culvert was addressed after the installation of the multi-use trail, then the culvert should be lined instead of replaced. If replaced, the necessary equipment would crush the new concrete.

Interim Fire Chief Holmes re-entered the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Mr. Bradley then continued by stating that the Water Plant was in overall good shape. The only project needed would be the installation of a compressed air mixing system in the Brentwood water tower at about \$30,000.00. This system would prevent stratification and improve water quality. One such system was installed in the Industrial Park water tower over the Summer and was working very well.

Councilman Eyer asked about the activated carbon replacement for the current fiscal year. Mr. Bradley replied that would be completed in the latter part of February or early March.

Mr. Kocher said that the Street Department was hoping to complete three large street projects in the new fiscal year. He hoped to reconstruct N. Silver Street from Butler to Locust Streets at a contracted price of about \$350,000.00. He pointed out this estimate had increased by \$50,000.00 compared to the prior year.

The next street project was hoped to be the asphalt overlay of E. Cherry Street from Elliott to Fair Streets, and also S. Morgan Street from Elm Street to North Avenue. This would be at a contract cost of about \$380,000.00. This estimate had increased by \$80,000.00 compared to the last year.

The last project was hoped to be the asphalt overlay of S. Camp Street from Chestnut Street to North Avenue at a contracted price of about \$250,000.00. That project estimate had also increased by \$50,000.00 compared to the prior year.

Additionally, Mr. Kocher hoped to install a box culvert on Orchard Drive at about \$120,000.00. Currently, two culverts were on Orchard Drive with bottoms gone and causing sinkhole problems.

The Street Department was also in need of a new backhoe to replace a 1999 Case with over 13,000 hours. This should cost about \$95,000.00. The Department was also needing a dump truck with a new plow and controls. Purchasing a new dump truck would be about \$115,000.00, and a used dump truck would be about \$60,000.00. Mr. Fulk confirmed that the need of a new dump truck was very serious.

As the City's referendum to increase sales tax for roads had failed, Mayor Lambird was aware that the City could not propose another such referendum for quite some time. The next time the City could propose such a tax increase, he felt a much better job needed to be done to promote the desperate need.

Mr. Barker wanted to detail how cost estimates for projects were derived. He explained that the estimates were based on other similar projects that were bid in our region. Actual costs and/or actual bids received could be more or could be less than expected.

Councilman Eyer asked Mr. Kocher which of the three street projects he felt was most critical. Mr. Kocher felt that was a tough decision. He recognized that Cherry Street was in the worst shape, but ultimately felt that the N. Silver Street project would be of most importance due to its high traffic volume. He added that even if the project were budgeted in 2021-2022, there was a chance that it would not be completed that same fiscal year.

Mrs. Guinn informed the group that \$685,000.00 was in the MFT fund and could be used towards one of the street projects.

Mayor Lambird was curious what could be worked out to get better pricing on MFT rock.

In the Mechanic Department, the only need Mr. Fulk had was for an I.H.D. truck scan tool at a cost of \$4,200.00.

Mayor Lambird asked for the condition of the leaf collection equipment and the street sweeper. Mr. Fulk replied that the leaf collection equipment was just fine. The street sweeper was always of higher maintenance, but was starting to experience more problems.

Mayor Lambird asked if Mr. Fulk saw any additional needs in the departments. Mr. Fulk replied that a new backhoe was definitely needed.

For the Water Distribution Department, Mr. Williams was aware that the Jasper/Lincoln waterline project would be coming up at a cost of \$505,000.00. He also wanted to complete Phase 3 of the GIS mapping project at a cost of \$25,000.00.

Needs in Water Distribution included a new pickup truck at \$22,000.00 and a new line locator at \$6,500.00.

Mayor Lambird was interested in electronic meter reading equipment. He wondered if Mr. Williams knew how much such an upgrade would cost. He was aware that many other cities were upgrading their meters and equipment. He also wondered how many manhours it took to read the meters.

Mr. Williams indicated that it took two employees about one work week to complete, so approximately 80 hours. About another week after meter reading was spent checking and swapping out dead meters. Mr. Williams said he was also interested in such an upgrade.

Mayor Lambird asked for an approximate price of how much it would take to start a transfer with the smallest “book.” Mr. Williams replied that would be about a \$15,000.00 start up cost for necessary equipment and 25 meters. Overall, Mr. Williams believed it would cost about \$300 per meter to actually upgrade to drive-by reading, or about \$90,000.00 for one “book.” An option was also available that a simple button could be pushed at City Hall that would automatically read the meters.

Mayor Lambird felt that the upgrade would increase efficiency in the department. It would free up the employees to work on other necessary projects, and could speed up the billing process. Some other members of the Council were not so sure that the benefit would be worth such expense.

Councilwoman Henton felt that one or two part-time employees could be found to do the meter reading. Those employees would do nothing else other than read meters. Mr. Williams was not in favor. He felt it would be more of a hassle than it would be worth.

Councilman Eyer asked how many water meters were in all “books.” Mr. Williams estimated about 4,500.

Mayor Lambird felt that there would not be cost savings in the short-term, but felt that there would be cost savings long-term. He did not feel that other utilities would be making the investment on upgrading if that was not so.

If the City went with the upgrade, Mr. Williams stated that he would not suggest using Sensus. That was the brand purchased in 2017 and had caused several problems.

In the Sewer Department, Mr. Lathrop was still focusing on the UV Fecal Coliform Treatment which would be about \$675,000.00. An EPA Loan was being sought for this project. The last loan update was that papers were sent into the EPA with the City awaiting word on that submission, and the City was also still waiting on word from the bond attorney.

Mr. Lathrop also requested a half ton pickup in the amount of \$22,000.00 to replace their 1998 unit.

Lastly, Mr. Lathrop wanted to rebuild the final tank spur at \$20,000.00. He noted that sandblasting and paint work was also needed on two of the finals. Sandblasting and painting would be about \$80,000.00. One of the finals was also leaking and would need to have that addressed.

Mr. Barker reminded everyone that the Sewer Department also handled the annual Mosquito Control Program. The program cost several thousands of dollars per year on chemical, plus the cost of fuel and manpower. He wondered if the Council was interested in continuing the program.

Many of those present did not feel that mosquito fogging was effective. Councilwoman Henton felt that what would be more effective was having residents take abatement measures themselves. Mr. Lathrop noted that mosquito treatment would still be done in areas that had standing water.

If the decision was made to cancel the program, Mrs. Sterchi requested a detailed summary as to why that would be beneficial so that City Hall could do their best to inform the public. She felt the public would not be happy to have that program cancelled. She recalled receiving calls after a quieter fogger was purchased and used. Residents were upset because they believed the fogger was not coming around simply because it was not as loud.

Mayor Lambird then told the group that he was very interested in a TIF Façade Grant Program. He also wanted to see about billing insurance for fire calls. He felt that insurance companies would have the intention of paying for such charges, but would not pay unless they were billed.

Councilwoman Henton wondered if billing could also be done when the Fire Department responded to vehicle accidents.

RCDC Executive Director Lauren McClain was present. She told that Fire Department call outs were covered on homeowners insurance policies, but not on auto. Mayor Lambird disagreed, stating that someone had told him that their department billed out for all calls. Mrs. McClain and Interim Fire Chief Holmes felt that there was a difference between billing out insurance on calls versus actually getting paid.

Mrs. McClain speculated that medical claims may pay out under ambulance charges if the Fire Department responded to an accident. Additionally, she had the Olney Fire Department

at her house two times. When she asked if they needed her insurance information, she was told they did not. If claimed, that would have been \$500.00 received for each call.

Because so much interest had been received on City lakes recently, Councilwoman Henton also felt that the City needed to expand on their amenities at the lakes. She wondered if the Parks & Recreation Board could be used to help explore this or if another separate committee should be formed.

Councilwoman Henton also wanted to upgrade the audio system at City Hall. Mrs. Sterchi indicated that Park Department Foreman Jeremy Thomas had come by to evaluate the current set up. Mr. Thomas had no better suggestions at that time for Zoom, but Mrs. Sterchi would provide Councilwoman Henton with a summary of what he had talked about.

Mayor Lambird felt that Mr. Thomas could likely set up the proper equipment to stream Council meetings for the future. There was a difference between streaming for people to view versus conferencing a meeting for viewers to participate.

Councilwoman Henton then stated that she would like for the Plan Commission to reconsider the current sign ordinance. She felt the regulations were more than what Olney actually needed.

Lastly, the Councilwoman wanted to re-evaluate the current leaf collection program. She felt that the program was a service offered that should come with a fee. She explained that not every house in the City utilized the program and that it was typically the same houses over and over again. Additionally, she felt that the program took the department away from other projects of more importance such as sidewalks or street work.

Mayor Lambird asked Mr. Kocher if he had any recommendations for the program. Mr. Kocher stated that he would wish for the routes to be ran twice per year. In between those two cycles, residents should be able to handle their own leaves.

A few members of the Council seemed to express possible interest in lifting the burning ban. Councilwoman Henton did not feel that lifting the ban was possible at this point.

Councilwoman Henton then said she liked the Mayor's written suggestion of offering a community bulk cleanup and she supported issuing citations to those that did not clean up their properties afterward.

Councilwoman Fehrenbacher agreed. She had helped organize such events in the past and felt them to be a success. However, she did not support having City workers pick up the items. She felt that people could drop them off at a central location. She also recalled that the drop off area would need to still be monitored a few days after the program ended.

While not opposed to the overall idea, Mr. Barker wanted to make the Council aware of some issues with the suggestion. First of all, a City employee would need to monitor the drop

off site to ensure that no items were left that could not be accepted. Even so, there would be no telling what would be dropped off during the night time hours. Councilwoman Fehrenbacher felt that enough volunteers could be found to monitor the site for most of the time.

Mrs. McClain felt the suggestion would be beneficial. She said that some effort would need to be taken in contacting places that would accept items that were dropped off but could not be taken by Republic.

Councilman Eyer felt that the benefit would outweigh the concerns.

Councilman Eyer also wanted to see further development of East Fork Lake. He felt it might be time to revisit adding boat slips near Rotary Park.

The Councilman then asked if the City was on track in planning for the resurfacing of Main Street. Mr. Barker indicated so, but pointed out that the project would likely not take place until the storm sewer was repaired.

Councilman Eyer then stated his support of downtown beautification projects. Mr. Barker also planned to take a look at some of those projects at the same time as the storm sewer repair.

Councilwoman Fehrenbacher expressed her continued displeasure with the condition of the Fair Board fence. She felt that the rest of the City Park looked nice, but the fairgrounds seemed to be an eyesore.

Councilwoman Henton agreed and felt that the fairgrounds did not look anything like what was promised when they were given a lease from the City. She asked if someone from the City could contact the Fair Board about that. Mr. Barker indicated he would do so.

Mr. Colwell added that whenever he had to notify people about junk and weed violations, he was typically met with a retort about how the City could not even mow the park and keep it looking nice.

Mr. Barker had spoken to a member of the Fair Board in the past that said it was difficult to get Fair Board members to put in a lot of work because they were all volunteers with other commitments. Even so, Councilwoman Henton reminded that the Fair Board had always been a group of volunteers.

Councilwoman Fehrenbacher also felt that the repair estimate for the City Park fountain was too expensive. Since so many people had apparently wanted the fountain to be saved, she felt that surely a committee would have been formed to raise money for repairs.

Councilman Eyer was aware that there was some such interest, but that some people had concerns. One concern was that they paid taxes and the fountain was an existing park feature. Because of this, it was believed that the City had an obligation to maintain those features. Even so, the Councilman was aware of about five people that would be approaching the City in the

warmer months about how they could contribute. The Councilman felt it could be a cooperative arrangement.

Mayor Lambird felt it was extremely unfair to the VFW that they had approached the City in order to replace the fountain with a memorial fountain, and would also maintain the fountain memorial in the future. All of that would have been at no cost to the City. Instead, a group of people had a fit about that and now the citizens of Olney were expected to repair the fountain for \$22,000.00 when it could have been taken care of for nothing.

Before ending the meeting, Mr. Barker thanked the Council for their support during this difficult year. He also felt that the supervisors had been great stewards of City money and that they had honored their commitment of asking permission for large projects and equipment before moving forward in this pandemic.

AGENDA #6 “ADJOURN” Councilwoman Fehrenbacher moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Henton. Councilman Eyer, Councilwomen Fehrenbacher, Henton, and Mayor Lambird voted yes. There were no opposing votes. The motion carried.

The special meeting of City Council adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Kelsie J. Sterchi
City Clerk