

Minutes of the Vermilion City Council Meeting

Monday, April 20, 2020

Videos and minutes of council meetings are available to the public to view online at www.cityofvermilion.com under 'meetings' tab (City Meeting Minutes or Videos).

Vermilion City Council: Steve Herron, Council President; Monica Stark, Council at Large; Emily Skahen, Ward One; Frank Loucka, Ward Two; Steve Holoavacs, Ward Three; Barb Brady, Ward Four; Brian Holmes, Ward Five; G. Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk

Administrative Staff: Mayor Jim Forthofer; Amy Hendricks, Finance Director; Chris Howard, City Engineer; Tony Valerius, Service Director; Ken Stumphauzer, Law Director

CALL TO ORDER:

Steve Herron, President of Council called the Monday, April 20, 2020 Vermilion City Council Meeting to order.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The members of Council, administrative staff, and audience participants recited the Pledge of Allegiance; a moment of silence followed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

S. Holoavacs MOVED; M. Stark seconded to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2020 meeting. Roll Call Vote 7 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL'S REPORT:

S. Herron asked everyone to continued to follow the directive of the Department of Health on the state and national levels. He said everyone has a right to their own opinions and protecting their own health. He asked everyone to respect their fellow citizens.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Utilities:

F. Loucka reported on the meeting of April 13. The next meeting is scheduled for May 11, 2020 at a time to be determined.

Port Authority:

F. Loucka reported on the meeting of April 9. The next meeting is scheduled for May 14, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

Finance:

B. Brady reported on the meeting held April 13. The next meeting is scheduled for May 11, 2020 at a time to be determined.

Planning Commission:

B. Brady reported the next meeting is scheduled for April 29 at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom Video meeting.

Health & Safety:

B. Holmes reported on the meeting held April 13. The next meeting is scheduled for May 11, 2020 at a time to be determined.

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Parks and Recreation:

The next meeting is scheduled is for April 21, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom Video meeting.

Historic Design & Review:

Emily Skahen reported the next meeting is scheduled for April 29, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. on Zoom Video meeting.

Vermilion Tree Commission:

Emily Skahen reported the next meeting has not been scheduled at this time.

Streets, Buildings & Grounds:

The next meeting is scheduled for May 11, 2010 at a time to be determined.

Zoning Board of Appeals:

S. Holovacs reported the next meeting is scheduled for April 28, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom Video meeting.

MAYOR/SAFETY DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Mayor Forthofer provided his submitted report as read into the record. He highlighted important aspects of the report verbally.

Easter Bunny

Last week I meant to recognize the Easter Bunny for his ride around town. It was an uplifting moment in the middle of a stressful time. I want to recognize Parks Board member Erika Cann, her husband John and brother Mark for arranging this event all on their own. Also, Fire Marshall Rodney Johnston and his wife Cathy from the VFD Social Club for escorting the Bunny and announcing his arrival. Brummer's donated the bunny outfit and Liberty Ford donated the convertible. Vermilion's volunteers are second to none. It was a much-needed fun moment for kids along the bunny trail.

Waste Pick Up

I have had several conversations with Republic. The Law Director and I prepared a letter which was emailed to Republic Friday. By end of day Friday Republic called to say the service would be restored. Thank you Law Director Stumphauzer.

Bulk Pick Up will resume as scheduled May 6. Yard waste pick up will resume on this week's trash pickup day

Hiring Freeze

Effective immediately, the City is under a full-time employee hiring freeze. The freeze will remain until further notice. All projects, not already funded, are under review. City mayors are petitioning congress for emergency stabilization funds to be included in the next federal relief package. The proposed stabilization funds would be used to give offset the cities' income tax revenue shortfall. No word back from Congress yet.

Also, I am asked occasionally if the City will provide financial relief to small businesses in town that are in danger of failing. I explain that the City does not have that kind of resources. I do help them find the application to Small Business Administration programs. The Chamber of Commerce and Main Street also help businesses access available State and Federal programs though I hear that some of them are either out of money or difficult to get an application through.

Emily Skahen said she has heard different things about schools and the closings for the rest of the year and wondered if this had been determined yet. Mayor Forthofer said the Governor announced today that the schools would be continuing to operate remotely until the end of the school year. Therefore, they physically won't return to school for this term.

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S. Herron thanked everyone in the community who is stepping up. Everyone is remaining cordial and kind, which is appreciated.

SERVICE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

T. Valerius discussed the City's Water Plant. Nearly 4½ years ago, the City of Vermilion received a letter from the Ohio EPA summarizing the results of a Sanitary Survey that had been conducted at the City's Water Plant. In short, the letter stated that "either major upgrades to the water treatment plant or connection to an approved public water system is needed to ensure reliable and safe water is provided to your customers." Also included was a list of 34 Significant Deficiencies, Violations and Recommendations that needed resolved in order to continue the operation of the Water Plant. The Plant also received a Conditional License to Operate which means that the EPA would allow us to operate provided we immediately began correcting the most critical violations and met timelines that they set for the work to be completed. I must stress that NONE of the violations were a result of the quality of water distributed out into the system, but rather for dated technology and lack of replacement parts at the plant, and the maintenance, due to age, of the plant and distribution system.

Since receiving that letter over four years ago, the City has worked diligently to correct every deficiency, every violation and every feasible recommendation the EPA handed us. Unfortunately, it did require us to add an EPA fee to all water accounts, but we have substantially upgraded our plant and its systems, and we have begun replacing the most critical water mains in the City as part of our 10-year water main replacement program developed by the City Engineer. I am proud to announce that I recently received our annual license from the EPA, and we have been upgraded from a conditional to a full license to operate. I would like to acknowledge the distribution employees and water plant operators for their hard work, as well as the water plant maintenance relief operator and the City's water plant superintendent, Eugene Baker who all contributed to the goal of obtaining this full license to operate.

S. Herron said this is extremely good news and thanked Tony and the staff at the Water Plant.

B. Brady asked if there are any are any future repairs that are expected or are they stable for a while. T. Valerius said there is nothing major. They will continue with the city's distribution system in replacing main lines, but nothing at the plant within the next year or two that he can think of. B. Brady asked if they could feel good that rates will remain relatively stable. T. Valerius said the EPA could come in at any time and state the City needs to repair something that is unforeseen, but he doesn't anticipate anything at this time as they corrected all violations.

M. Stark thanked the department for all their hard work as they've been asked to do a lot of major upgrades and they have come through it. In the future, if needs come up, she was certain they would come to council to continue moving in the right direction.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Amy Hendricks submitted her report as verbally relayed to City Council as follows:

Payment Deferral

Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) has announced they will not be collecting the normal July 1 payment toward any of their project loans due to the COVID 19 economic impact on local governments. This will give the city approximately the following reduction in payments for 2020:

Fund 602	WWTP	\$ 45,000
Fund 604	Storm	\$ 30,000
Fund 605	EPA	\$108,000

They are adding this payment to the end of each of the amortization schedules without additional accrual of interest. A double payment is an option in January 2021; however, I suggest that we retain the additional funds due to the work that still needs to be addressed in the city.

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Meter Project Update

The \$2.2 million bonds supporting the meter project were sold on April 16 after a couple weeks of delay to get some stability in the market. We are very satisfied with the outcome. As a comparison, the City of Dublin (A+ rated) sold a one year note on the same day at a higher rate.

There was premium generated through the transaction that covered all costs of issuance.

One of the factors to consider in this project that it is estimated that the inaccuracy of current meters represents a loss of \$36,000 per month so timing was very important.

She said they did receive four bids on the bonds that were to be sold. The low bidder has a strong presence in Ohio at 1.983%. The city got a lower payment this year at \$70,000 and next year it will be around \$120,000, then it levels off at \$250,000 for the next eight years.

Per city finances on an economic standpoint, she reiterated that the revenues and aid that is coming in is all for expenses for communities with populations over one million. Hopefully, there will be groups or counties that will apply that will get the city some of that funding, but the issue is that it only goes for additional expenses, which to date the City has not had significant ones. There's no loss of revenue yet. There was discussion on potential state revenues, such as the fuel tax, which the city hopes to get some growth from this year, but the ODOT traffic measurements so far are charting a 45% reduction in standard traffic levels, so this could have an impact overall going forward.

She said they had previously discussed delinquencies in services and the courts, etc. and one issue the city will have is the fact they have so many residents working outside the city, they're not seeing those variations when it comes to withholding taxes. These are filed with estimated returns, so the city needs to be conservative through this period. It could be a year until the city knows the full impact. Thankfully, the city carried over an additional balance in the general fund, which should help with the cash flow situation, so they shouldn't be scrambling to meet payrolls and things like that.

CITY ENGINEER'S REPORT:

C. Howard reported the Haber Road Replacement Project is on hold until the water line installation can be completed. Additionally, the water line work is suspended until they receive further direction from the Governor. The Sanford Street Water Line project is on hold as well until further notice.

B. Brady asked if anything has happened with the stormwater on Edgewater with flow meters. C. Howard said they are still waiting on a price for televising the laterals.

LAW DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

B. Brady thanked K. Stumphauzer for the letter he wrote to Republic Services, Inc. S. Herron acknowledged Council's appreciation as non-compliance of the city's contract was not in the city's best interest. Therefore, he thanked the Law Director for his letter as the city needs to stand with their contractual rights.

Reading of the Ordinances:

Second Reading – Ordinance 2020-15: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 2020-5 ADOPTED MARCH 2, 2020 TO MAKE APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES FOR THE CITY OF VERMILION, OHIO FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2020 AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Second Reading – Ordinance 2020-17: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF VERMILION, OHIO TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT FOR MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE CITY'S CEMETERIES.

Second Reading – Ordinance 2020-18: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF VERMILION, OHIO TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT ON BEHALF OF SAID CITY WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF BROWNHELM, LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO TO PROVIDE FIRE PROTECTION FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 1, 2020 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2021 AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

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Announcement of Meeting Dates:

May 4, 2020 – Vermilion City Council Meeting – 6pm – Zoom Video Meeting

Adjournment:

Upon no further business coming before the body, Steve Herron, President of Council adjourned the Vermilion City Council meeting.

Transcribed by Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk