

MONONA CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
January 19, 2021

The regular meeting of the Monona City Council, via Zoom, was called to order by Mayor O'Connor at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Mary K. O'Connor, Alderpersons Doug Wood, Jennifer Kuhr, Kathy Thomas, Molly Grupe, Nancy Moore (late due to technical difficulties), and Kristie Goforth

Also Present: City Administrator Bryan Gadow, City Planner Doug Plowman, Fire Chief Jeremy McMullen, Parks & Recreation Director Jake Anderson, Zach Simpson from Strand Associates, and City Clerk Joan Andrusz

ROLL CALL AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor O'Connor noted "committees" should be amended to "the community" in her comments in New Business.

A motion by Alder Wood, seconded by Alder Grupe to approve the Minutes of the January 4, 2021 City Council meeting as amended, was carried.

APPEARANCES

State Senator Melissa Agard introduced herself and Outreach Director Megan Wittman and provided information on a COVID-19-related bill that is close to what Governor Evers proposed. The Senate will receive the Governor's budget by the end of the month; some funds may come from President Biden. After that there will be a Zoom listening session on February 3 at 4:30 p.m. She will send information to City Administrator Gadow.

PUBLIC HEARING and CONSENT AGENDA

There was no Public Hearing or Consent Agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

City Planner Plowman reported the Landmarks Commission recommended selection of two consultants out of the five proposals that were received. One will work on the two residential property's National Register Nomination and the other will work on the one commercial property. This breakout of duties will allow them to meet the August deadline. Alder Kuhr questioned how the commercial property benefits since they are a non-profit and don't have access to the tax credits provided. City Planner Plowman responded they get a reduced amount and can sell the leftover tax credits. Once they are listed on the Registry an additional level of review is added at the state level for projects, which is a 90-day process. It is designed to not be additionally burdensome. Alder Moore stated the non-profit Restore has had challenges maintaining their property and questioned whether Registry would require them to maintain it. City Planner Plowman responded property maintenance would be addressed under local upkeep standards. City Administrator Gadow explained the Registry only addresses projects at a property.

City Planner Plowman reported fifteen properties were deemed eligible. Once grant funds were secured they were discussed with the Historical Preservation Office. Then property owner support and whether they wanted to proceed was gauged. An RFP went out with six properties and then, with property owner approval, the applications were down to three. The funding covers those that want to proceed. Alder Goforth stated if more information is desired on the tax credit process, the consultant explained it in detail at the Monona Grove School District meeting in early December. She thanks City Planner Plowman for his extensive work on this project.

A motion by Alder Goforth, seconded by Alder Wood to approve Resolution 21-1-2458 Authorizing Staff to Execute Professional Service Contracts for National Register Nominations, was carried.

NEW BUSINESS

City Administrator Gadow provided information on Ordinance 1-21-737 Updating the Fees, Fines and Penalties Schedule, reviewing highlighted changes. Most are ambulance fees and Parks & Recreation programs, at Below Deck, and at the skating rink. Fire Chief McMullen reported the Public Safety Committee approved updating fees to current billing practices, breaking out care and service rates based on what's provided. Medicare and Medicaid pay a lower amount for bills. Medicare doesn't pay for supplies, only a base rate and mileage, and most patients have supplemental insurance to cover the balance. Medicaid does not allow billing for the uncovered balance. Private insurance pays the whole bill and collects from the patient anything not covered. 30% of patients have private insurance, 53% have Medicare and/or Medicaid, and the rest are self-payers.

Fire Chief McMullen reported he aimed for the middle of what area departments charge. Fees were last updated in 2019. Alders Moore and Thomas stated individual impacts were discussed by the Committee, with compassion for people and their ability to pay, especially for those with lower incomes. Fire Chief McMullen stated balances are written off by the billing company. If the patient can't afford a bill they can call the billing company who will work with them based on the patient's income level. He'd rather have people comfortable calling; information about handling payment is part of the billing information.

Recreation Director Anderson reported Community Center rental fees were taken out of the schedule; there will be no rentals. Evening meetings of Monona-based groups, like Girl Scout Troops, are not charged a fee. Changes were made to the fees for the Monona Bank River Rink, park shelters, and swimming pool. Alder Kuhr thanks him for lowering fees and for work on the Lagoon to provide ice skating to those who can't afford the River Rink.

A motion by Alder Thomas, seconded by Alder Moore to suspend the rules and take action on Resolution 21-1-2460 Amending the 2021 Capital Budget for the Purchase of Fire/EMS Equipment, was carried.

Fire Chief McMullen reported that after review he found that much of the turnout gear was out of date. Madison College won't accept students with out-of-date gear. Because AEDs are not needed, those funds can be used for gear. Money saved on Town of Madison purchases helped. EMS-only staff had no gear so he added that. He went out for bids and saved \$600 off each set. He also moved up the tablet replacement. Two are needed because if one goes down that ambulance can't be used. Ice rescue equipment was purchased using donation money from Town of Madison. Gear replacements will now be kept up to date going forward and will level out at 5 to 6 sets per year. Mayor O'Connor and members thank Fire Chief McMullen for his resourcefulness, along with Assistant Fire Chief Dan Eklof.

A motion by Alder Thomas, seconded by Alder Moore to approve Resolution 21-1-2460 Amending the 2021 Capital Budget for the Purchase of Fire/EMS Equipment. On a roll call vote, all members voted in favor of the motion.

A motion by Alder Kuhr, seconded by Alder Grupe to suspend the rules and take action on Resolution 21-1-2461 Approving a Final Design for Stone Bridge Park Improvements, was carried.

Recreation Director Anderson reviewed design issues with stormwater, accessibility, and the Pagoda. The final design was approved unanimously by the Parks & Recreation Board on January 12. Council approval is needed tonight to allow time for newspaper publication in January and February for the bid opening and meeting dates. Mr. Simpson projected and reviewed the plan. Grants were received for the underground stormwater basin. The ADA-compliant pathway will improve accessibility. The Pagoda area was opened up with stepped-up stone walls. Benches, bicycle rack, bollard lighting, and landscaping were reviewed. Tree loss will be replaced. Lake access is provided up to DNR limits for ice fishers and paddle craft. Reinforced grass surfacing will reduce damage from Public Works vehicles when work is done on the basin. Alder Goforth questioned whether the 6-foot walkway could be reduced, as requested by public comment, by using this material. Mr. Simpson responded pavement is sturdier. He reported 100-year flood water will stay within the underground pipe. Because those events are happening more frequently more work was done to address more than that level outside the pipe, including an additional grate and reinforced swale. He can't predict the future but has to work within current guidelines.

Members expressed appreciation for the collaborative work and comprehensive planning, especially for the wider pathway. Alder Goforth stated the end design is very positive but the cost is too high with the current economic impacts of COVID-19 on taxpayers and the fact that Fund Balance funds were moved to cover Operating Budget costs. Mayor O'Connor stated both portions of the work are being done this year so the park is only torn up once; this will save costs. Alder Moore stated the funding is already approved; tonight's action approves the plan. This doesn't take funds from the Operating Budget; it is a Capital Budget item. Alder Goforth responded the funds all come from one source.

A motion by Alder Wood, seconded by Alder Grupe to approve Resolution 21-1-2461 Approving a Final Design for Stone Bridge Park Improvements, was carried. Alder Goforth voted against the motion.

A motion by Alder Grupe, seconded by Alder Moore to suspend the rules and take action on Resolution 21-1-2462 Authorizing a Letter of Support for the Monona Grove School District Energy Innovation Grant Application and Monona Grove High School Solar Project, was carried.

Alder Moore reported this action will express the Council's support for the High School's solar installation which is part of the community's 100% renewable energy goal. Part of the funding for the \$1.2 million project will come from a \$250,000 grant; the application is due on Friday. It is the largest array on a K-12 school in Wisconsin and will have a positive cash flow in the first year of operation, providing 48% of the school's energy needs. The array is in the curriculum as a teaching opportunity; Mayor O'Connor reported it will be used as a test case for other schools to consider. Members thank Alder Moore and the Sustainability Committee for bringing this forward. Alder Goforth reported she was on the roof of Madison College to see their array; it is a wonderful experience to see from that perspective.

A motion by Alder Thomas, seconded by Alder Goforth to approve Resolution 21-1-2462 Authorizing a Letter of Support for the Monona Grove School District Energy Innovation Grant Application and Monona Grove High School Solar Project, was carried.

A motion by Alder Thomas, seconded by Alder Moore to suspend the rules and take action on Resolution 21-1-2459 Combining City of Monona Voting Wards for the Spring Primary on February 16, 2021, was carried.

City Clerk Andrusz reported approval is needed tonight due to the timing required. Because COVID-19 is still out of control and this is a lower turnout election, it made sense to combine the wards and have all voting on Election Day for the February 16 Spring Primary take place at the Community Center. Voting for the April 6 Spring Election will be held at the usual two polling places. She thanks the Council for this action.

A motion by Alder Thomas, seconded by Alder Grupe to approve Resolution 21-1-2459 Combining City of Monona Voting Wards for the Spring Primary on February 16, 2021, was carried.

REPORTS

Members announced meeting dates and times and provided the following:

Mayor O'Connor reported a monthly eNewsletter will be produced to increase communications with residents; the City now has more bandwidth and Community Media staff to help with this. There will be a Nehemiah Center cultural engagement session for staff and the Council on January 25; she and City Administrator Gadow are working with Dr. Gee on an executive training session on January 27. A community survey will be developed and a community listening session will be provided on February 9 regarding hiring the new Police Chief. City Administrator Gadow stated the Police & Fire Commission, the recruitment firm GovHR, and the Nehemiah Center will co-host this event.

Mayor O'Connor provided a San Damiano status update. Fund raising is being done to raise as much as possible to reduce the cost to taxpayers prior to the June 1 closing. Fund raising, like that of entities like the Friends of San Damiano, is confidential. There is no conceptual plan for the property right now. As much public input as possible will be gathered, but the Master Plan will take 8 to 15 months and there is no need to rush to finish it; the desire is to do it right. An easement agreement with Dane County will be negotiated. DNR grants are being applied for and once purchased the land will be open to the public, possibly with picnic tables and pathways. The house will not be open; it is not safe and will be secured.

Alder Moore reported the City was awarded the Urban Project of the Year from the Clean Lakes Alliance for committing the San Damiano property for public enjoyment rather than development, and recognizing its value in terms of stormwater mitigation. Outflow from the Madison neighborhood across the street will be addressed to reduce the size of the catch basin. The San Damiano website will be available later this week and she thanked those who helped develop and host that site, especially Monona resident Dan Costello and his company Acuminum, photographer Greg Bleck, Community Media staff Will Nimmow and Samantha Griffin and Friends of San Damiano Board member Pat Howell for their video, and Alder Grupe for serving as copy editor. The planning could take until 2025 to complete. Community engagement is a huge component. An MOU will be presented to the Council in February. The Friends group has committed to \$1 million for a Master Plan. Mayor O'Connor sincerely thanks Alder Moore for all her time and extensive effort on this project.

Alder Wood reported there was an amazing presentation at last week's Parks & Recreation Board meeting by three 6th graders supporting their mountain bike path and/or track idea, with attendance by several of their friends as well. Alder Grupe agreed and reported they provided a great presentation of a training area and trails.

Alder Goforth reported the Landmarks Commission is very close to sending out an RFP for the Pagoda and the Transit Commission is working on an RFP.

Alder Moore reported last week's Plan Commission meeting was well-attended and the Shopko building use proposal was tabled. She thanks those in attendance.

City Clerk Andrusz reminded listeners that tonight's Council action approved all voting on Election Day, February 16, will be at the Community Center. Announcements and signage will be provided to let voters know of this temporary change. Voting for the April 6 Spring Election will return to the usual two polling places. Other work in the Department, including Board of Review dates which have been posted on the City's website, has begun and tax season is almost over.

Fire Chief McMullen thanks the Council for their actions and compliments tonight. He thanks the 37 volunteers who worked for over 5,000 hours last year and stated that Assistant Chief Dan Eklof did a great job as Acting Chief and continues to provide valuable assistance to him. He has submitted a grant application for a lift system that prevents back injuries that will have no cost to the City. He has also applied for a federal breathing apparatus grant with a 5% match; this is a second attempt for this funding. Every Tuesday in February there will be water rescue work performed and all are welcome to attend these joint training sessions. Location is to be determined. Next week's session will be in-house with familiarization training. The Dane County annual report will be available soon and he will share that with the Council. He will graph Department activities monthly and share that report with the Council. He thanks the Council, City Administrator Gadow, and Director of Administrative Services Leah Kimmell for their support and help in his first months on the job. Mayor O'Connor, along with members, thanks Fire Chief McMullen for his work and his food donation pick-up. The commercial barrels have been taken in but they are still at City buildings. Fire Chief McMullen reported 1,500 pounds has been collected so far. Alder Thomas reported that many people have written checks as well.

City Administrator Gadow reported the City Hall internal lobby doors are now to be locked electronically from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. using COVID-19 funds. There is an intercom inside to get help from the Police Department or City Hall if entrance is needed. The lower Fire Department entrance is also locked. There are plans for an in-person Earth Day recycling event, including Styrofoam, on April 24th.

APPOINTMENTS

There were no Appointments.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion by Alder Wood, seconded by Alder Grupe, to adjourn was carried. (8:42 p.m.)

Joan Andrusz
City Clerk