

MONONA CITY COUNCIL MINUTES  
February 15, 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 Kristie Goforth, Molly Grupe, Jennifer Kuhr, Nancy Moore, Kathy Thomas, and Doug Wood

Also Present: City Administrator Bryan Gadow, City Attorney Bill Cole, Public Works Director Dan Stephany, Parks & Recreation Director Jake Anderson, Fire Chief Jeremy McMullen, Administrative Services Director Leah Kimmell, Media Director Will Nimmow, Library Director Ryan Claringbole, Retired Library Youth Services Coordinator Karen Wendt, Bradley Wendt, Vanessa Wendt, Youth Services Coordinator Tiffany Helgerson, and Peter Lichtfeld

ROLL CALL AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion by Alder Grupe, seconded by Alder Moore, to approve the Minutes of the January 19, 2021 City Council meeting was carried.

APPEARANCES

Mayor O'Connor read a proclamation recognizing Karen Wendt on her retirement from the Monona Public Library.

Mayor O'Connor read a proclamation recognizing former Mayor Richard Lichtfeld and offering condolences to his family after his death on February 1.

Jeff Beckett, 4604 Winnequah Road, appeared before the Council and spoke regarding property maintenance enforcement. He explained that he has been trying to get the City to clean up his neighbor's yard for 15 years and said the City has lied to him. He has read the City Code and stated there are plenty of things the City can do to get this property cleaned up. He has been subpoenaed to appear in court and he sent the City an invoice for his hours spent on this. Attorney Cole responded that Mr. Beckett was never asked to provide the City any photos or spend any time on this matter. He was subpoenaed as a witness because the City has the burden of proof in prosecuting this case. Attorney Cole advised the Council not to answer Mr. Beckett's questions or discuss this matter until after the trial because the defendant is entitled to a fair trial.

PUBLIC HEARING and CONSENT AGENDA

There was no Public Hearing or Consent Agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

City Administrator Gadow reported that there are no additional changes to the Fees, Fines, and Penalties Schedule beyond what was presented at the last meeting.

A motion by Alder Grupe, seconded by Alder Wood, to approve Ordinance 1-21-737 Updating the Fees, Fines and Penalties Schedule was carried.

Discussion began regarding the recording of committee meetings. Alders were asked to speak to their committees and return with feedback. Alder Grupe reported that one member of the Senior Citizens' Committee does not want to be recorded. Alder Wood explained that the License Review Committee has continued to meet in person during the pandemic because information that is personal in nature, such as addiction or criminal information, is often discussed. The members of the Park and Recreation Board had no objection to being recorded.

Alder Thomas reported that the Public Safety Committee doesn't believe that people will take advantage of watching recorded meetings and because of that, some members are concerned about the use of resources and staff time for this purpose.

Alder Kuhr reported that members of both the Library Board and Public Works Committee expressed concerns. Some speculate that knowing they're being recorded will stifle discussion among members. The issue of minors being videotaped if they appear before a committee was also concerning to members of the Library Board. Alder Kuhr expressed concern for staff in that many videos of them will be online for future employers to see. She questioned whether this would be a good use of staff time and whether there is a demand for this.

Alder Grupe responded that recording and uploading Zoom meetings during the COVID pandemic won't require much staff time. Going forward after COVID will be different, however. But, for the sake of transparency and accessibility to City meetings, it could be helpful.

Alder Goforth stated that the Community Media Committee was 100% comfortable with being recorded, while one member of the Landmarks Commission did not want to be on YouTube. She stated that the Transit Commission's meeting that was recorded last week has 48 views, and we won't know the demand unless we try it. Her opinion is that if you agree to serve on a city committee, you agree to be open in public. Some committee decisions involve high-budget items. We should at least record those committees that approve big ticket items. Alder Thomas responded that after COVID, we will either continue or stop recording altogether. She asked if we need to have releases for minors. Attorney Cole answered that there is no expectation of privacy in a government meeting. If you appear at a public meeting, your consent is implicit whether you're a juvenile or an adult. Alder Thomas continued that she informally surveyed her friends. They stated that if their street is being reconstructed or there's a big park plan, they believe it's important to see the meetings. But, if the City spends time and money on this, what things won't the City be able to do.

Alder Moore reported that the Facilities Committee often meets at a conference table in the City Administration offices due to room conflicts and noted that this will be a problem as recording meetings long-term will require cameras and staffing.

Alder Kuhr addressed Alder Goforth's statement that the Community Media Committee was 100% comfortable with recording meetings. She recalls that there was not support from that committee for the recording and uploading of videos after COVID because of the lack of staff or budget to support this. She also said she spoke with several committee members who said they would resign if all meetings are recorded. Alder Goforth responded requiring people to operate around our meeting schedule leaves out a lot of people who don't have typical 9-5 jobs. She is amazed that there is resistance to this. She supports beginning with recording the high-budget meetings and projects. She offered that the League of Wisconsin Municipalities is offering a workshop on this very topic.

Mayor O'Connor said she believes we should put meetings on YouTube now and see what kind of response we get. Alder Wood agreed, stating that the Park & Recreation Board meeting last week was recorded and should be put on YouTube to see what interest it generates. He believes that being recorded is part of being on a public committee.

Alder Moore challenged whether transparency is being limited, stating that all meetings are noticed per state law. People can send comments before and after committee meetings, and all meeting minutes are posted on the City's website.

Alder Goforth said that since she's been on Council, all meetings have been recorded. Mayor O'Connor explained, and Director Nimmow confirmed, that only Council, Plan Commission, and Finance and Personnel are currently recorded. Other committees are only recorded if the staff person records the meeting for the purpose of taking minutes.

Alder Kuhr asked for clarification that tonight's discussion is for discussion only and this will come back to Council for a vote at a later time. Mayor O'Connor confirmed that statement.

### NEW BUSINESS

Public Works Director Stephany presented information regarding Resolution 21-2-2463 Award of Contract for the Pirate Island Bridge Replacement Project. One bid was received, from R.G. Huston for \$1,193,436.94. The project was put out for bid twice last year, and all bids came in over budget each time. So the project budget was revised and rebid this year. This year's bid is under the budgeted amount of \$1,425,000. The project is also eligible for a bridge grant reimbursement; the grant application will be submitted after the completion of the project. The project will be done in phases, with the final phase scheduled for completion in 2022. However, the contractor has the option to complete all phases in 2021 if desired. The project will begin no earlier than June 15 of this year, as the DNR has water restrictions in place from March 1 through June 15 for fish spawning.

Alder Wood inquired about how this year's bidding compared to last year's. Director Stephany responded that the City received one bid the first time and three bids the second time. This year's bid from R.G. Huston is almost identical to their bids last year. Alder Goforth asked if the City has worked with this contractor before. Director Stephany responded that R.G. Huston did all three phases of the Monona Drive project. They are a big contractor with high-value projects, and they are getting their foot in the door on bridge replacement.

Alder Goforth also inquired about the possibility of raising the bridge to allow more clearance for boats. Director Stephany replied that raising the bridge was explored but is not possible without the purchase of property, since the bridge approaches would have to be lengthened in order to accommodate a greater height, and there is currently not enough room to do this. He was also asked whether the relocation of the water main that is currently under the bridge will give boats more clearance. He responded that it will not, as the current location of the main doesn't impact navigation.

A motion by Alder Wood, seconded by Alder Grupe, to suspend the rules and take action on Resolution 21-2-2464 Purchase Approval of Outdoor Pool Heater was carried.

Park & Recreation Director Anderson reported on Resolution 21-2-2264 Purchase Approval of Outdoor Pool Heater. The current heater is at the end of its lifespan, and a new heater is expected to last for the remainder of the lifespan of the current pool. The proposal from Badger Swimpools is \$10,000 under budget, and that \$10,000 will be used if any other expenses related to the heater installation are necessary. Alder Goforth noted that the proposal does not include venting, piping, and electrical work. Director

Anderson verified that he will use the \$10,000 for any of this work, but he doesn't anticipate it will be necessary since the heater is a direct replacement.

A motion by Alder Grupe, seconded by Alder Wood to approve Resolution 21-2-2264 Purchase Approval of Outdoor Pool Heater. On a roll call vote, all members voted in favor of the motion.

Director Anderson next reported on Resolution 21-2-2465, A Resolution in Support of the Reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant. He thanked Alder Kuhr for her work on this and explained that this program is set to expire in 2022. The City has received past Knowles-Nelson grants for improvements at Woodland Park and Lottes Park and to purchase the land next to Frost Woods Park. It has been an important program that he would like to see continue. Alder Kuhr explained that the program was started in 1989 and generally provides a one-to-one match for qualifying projects. There is opposition in the State Legislature to renewing the program past 2021, but the WDNR has requested \$50 million per year to continue the program. Alder Kuhr recommends revising the resolution to match what is included in the Governor's budget which is set to be released this week. Her goal is for the press and constituents to see this resolution and reach out to their representatives in the Legislature to urge them to continue the program. Alder Grupe thanked Alder Kuhr and Director Anderson for their work on this resolution. Alder Moore asked if the Council should act on this tonight. Alder Kuhr responded that isn't necessary, as it will take time for any bills to work their way through the state committee process.

## REPORTS

Alder Goforth reported there are 700 subscribers to the City's new e-newsletter. The RFP for the Pagoda project has been issued and there is a site visit scheduled for all interested bidders on Feb. 26. The National Registry project is underway.

Alder Moore reported that development in the City tends to ebb and flow, and we are definitely in a flow period right now. Plan Commission will have busy meetings coming up.

Alder Wood reported that the Park & Recreation Board met last week, and several 6<sup>th</sup> graders made a presentation to the Board about creating a mountain bike track in Maywood Park. The Board is also considering how to raise funds for a local Eagle Scout project to construct a handicapped-accessible kayak launch at Schluter Beach.

Alder Thomas reported that the ZBA meets this Thursday at 5:45 p.m.

Alder Grupe supplemented Alder Wood's report about the Park & Recreation Board by adding that a public input session regarding the proposed mountain bike track in Maywood Park is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 25 from 4:15–5:30. Information is available on the City website and on Facebook. She also informed the Council that a member of the Senior Citizen's Committee, Sara Whalen, recently passed away and she expressed her condolences to Sara's family. Alder Grupe also reminded viewers that City Hall is open as a warming space in this cold weather.

Alder Kuhr reported that the Library Boards meets tomorrow night.

Administrator Gadow reported that a survey for residents regarding the kinds of traits they would like to see in our new police chief is available on the City's website until Feb. 19. When asked by Alder Goforth how many surveys have been completed to date, Administrator Gadow answered that he believes there have been around 50 responses so far.

Director Anderson said that residents living adjacent to Maywood Park will get certified letters to submit their input prior to any decisions regarding a mountain bike track. The Park & Recreation Board is expected to discuss the project in March. A bid opening is scheduled for the Stonebridge Park improvements this week. Bids for improvements at Woodland Park will be coming in March. Because of the cold weather in February, he expects to have the RiverRink open through the first two weeks of March.

Fire Chief McMullen reported that he has recently submitted several grant applications. He has also applied for the department to be a COVID vaccinator and plans to use the backup ambulance as a mobile vaccination unit for those who have difficulty leaving home for a vaccination. The department will also be doing training at 7:00 p.m. in the Yahara River in front of Grand Crossing Park tomorrow night, and some members will participate in the Polar Plunge while there. The Association will donate \$50 for anyone who gets in the water.

Director Kimmell reported that seasonal positions for lifeguards, aquatic attendants, head lifeguards, a pool manager, and summer landscape maintenance workers are currently posted on mymonona.com/jobs. She also reported that tomorrow is Primary Election Day, and all Monona voters vote at the Community Center. Polls are open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Mayor O'Connor informed the Council that they have received their lists of citizen committee members who have expiring terms. They are asked to respond to by early March so that new members can be found for any vacancies.

#### APPOINTMENTS

There were no Appointments.

#### ADJOURNMENT

A motion by Alder Thomas, seconded by Alder Grupe, to adjourn was carried. (8:31 p.m.)

Leah Kimmell  
Administrative Services Director