

**MINUTES
NEW COUNCIL CHAMBERS IN THE CIVIC COMPLEX
401 WEST WASHINGTON STREET, EAST PEORIA, ILLINOIS**

SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

The Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of East Peoria, Illinois was called to order by his Honor Mayor John P. Kahl presiding at 6:00 P.M. with proper notice having been given.

Upon the roll being called the following answered present: Mayor John P. Kahl, Commissioner Daniel S. Decker, Commissioner Mark E. Hill, Commissioner Seth D. Mingus, and Commissioner Michael L. Sutherland.
Absent: None.

The invocation was given by Commissioner Hill.

Mayor Kahl led the Council and the audience in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Motion by Commissioner Mingus, seconded by Commissioner Decker; Mr. Mayor, I move that the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on September 1, 2020 be approved as printed.

Yeas: Commissioner Decker, Hill, Mingus, Sutherland, and Mayor Kahl.

Nays: None.

Mayor Kahl declared the motion carried.

Mayor Kahl proclaimed September 14-20, 2020 as "Support Citizens with Intellectual Disabilities Week".

Mayor Kahl proclaimed September 20-26, 2020 as "Child Passenger Safety Week". Commissioner Mingus discussed the Fire Departments Car Seat Check.

Mayor Kahl stated if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to speak on any items on the agenda to come to the podium and state the matter or matters to be discussed. There was no response.

Resolution No. 2021-044 by Commissioner Hill, seconded by Commissioner Decker; BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EAST PEORIA, ILLINOIS that the claims as listed on Schedule No. 9 be allowed. Mr. Mayor, I, move that the Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to issue orders on the Treasurer for the various amounts, totaling \$334,663.60, and the schedule of bills be hereby adopted as presented.

Commissioner Hill explained that this Schedule of Bills is low because the payroll came in after the schedule of bills.

Yeas: Commissioners Decker, Hill, Mingus, Sutherland, and Mayor Kahl.

Nays: None

Mayor Mingus declared the motion carried.

Resolution No. 2021-046 by Commissioner Hill; WHEREAS, Camp Street Crossing LLC, the owner of Parcel No. 01-01-29-401-039 (the "Property"), has filed a complaint with the Tazewell County Board of Review (the "Board of Review") for the purpose of challenging the assessed value assigned to the Property for tax year 2019; and

WHEREAS, the City of East Peoria ("City") objected to the requested change in assessed value; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Review has affirmed the assessment originally assigned to the Property; and

WHEREAS, the owner of the Property has appealed the decision of the Board of Review to the Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board ("PTAB"); and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the City to intervene in the proceedings currently pending before PTAB;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EAST PEORIA, TAZEWELL COUNTY, ILLINOIS, THAT the Attorney for the City is hereby authorized and directed to obtain an appraisal for the Property and petition for leave to intervene in the proceeding involving the assessment of the Property, which proceeding is identified as Docket No. 2019-00177.001-C-2 currently pending before the Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board.

Motion by Commissioner Hill, seconded by Commissioner Mingus; Mr. Mayor, I move that Resolution No. 2021-046 be adopted as presented.

Commissioner Hill explained that Camp Street Crossing LLC appealed their 2019 property taxes and the City Attorney will be intervening on behalf of the City.

Yeas: Commissioners Decker, Hill, Mingus, Sutherland, and Mayor Kahl.

Nays: None.

Mayor Kahl declared the motion carried and Resolution No. 2021-046 be duly adopted as presented.

Resolution No. 2021-039 by Commissioner Decker, seconded by Commissioner Mingus; BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EAST PEORIA, ILLINOIS that Resolution No. 2021-039 hereto attached, a Resolution Requesting Permission for Temporary Closure of State Maintained Roadways for a Public Event for the Festival of Lights Parade on November 21, 2020, be hereby approved. Mr. Mayor, I move you that this Resolution No. 2021-039 having been read once by its title and having laid on the table for no less than one week for public inspection, be adopted as presented.

Commissioner Decker explained that this is a yearly item that seeks closure of state-maintained roadways for the Festival of Lights Parade.

Yeas: Commissioners Decker, Hill, Mingus, Sutherland, and Mayor Kahl.

Nays: None.

Mayor Kahl declared the motion carried and Resolution No. 2021-039 be duly adopted as presented.

Resolution No. 2021-045 by Commissioner Mingus; WHEREAS, Chad LaCost has been continuously employed by the City from October 7, 1996 through October 7, 2020, most recently occupying the position of Sergeant in the Police Department;

WHEREAS, Chad LaCost announced his intention to retire from employment effective at the end of his shift on October 7, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the City is appreciative of the long and continued service provided by Chad LaCost; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the City to execute the attached Separation Agreement;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EAST PEORIA, TAZEWELL COUNTY, ILLINOIS, THAT:

Section 1. The above recitals are found to be true and correct.

Section 2. The Mayor is hereby authorized to execute the Separation Agreement with such changes as the Mayor, in his sole discretion, may decide are in the best interest of the City of East Peoria.

Motion by Commissioner Mingus, seconded by Commissioner Sutherland; Mr. Mayor, I move that Resolution No. 2021-045 be adopted as presented.

Commissioner Mingus explained that this is a separation agreement for Chad LaCost. The Mayor and Commissioners thanked Sergeant LaCost for his service and wished him well in his retirement.

Mayor Kahl explained the payouts that Sergeant LaCost would receive for compensable hours that include three installments of \$20,397.82 payable on or before October 15, 2020, January 15, 2021, and January 15, 2022.

Yeas: Commissioners Decker, Hill, Mingus, Sutherland, and Mayor Kahl.

Nays: None.

Mayor Kahl declared the motion carried and Resolution No. 2021-045 be duly adopted as presented.

Mayor Kahl stated if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to speak on any items not on the agenda to come to the podium state the matter or matters to be discussed.

A resident came up to the podium to comment on her water bill. She explained that she and several people she knows are putting their property on the market due to their high water bill. She explained that the water bill is twice the amount than her Ameren bill. She asked what is being charged for taxes from other places. She explained that she loves East Peoria; however, she can't afford to live here and pay her water bill.

Mayor Kahl explained that the Water and Sewer fund is an enterprise fund that pays for its own costs. He explained that all the City Council members will likely discuss the water bill issue and answer questions.

Commissioner Sutherland explained that if usage is up then there is likely a pool, leak, or watering that has been done. He explained that most of citizens' property taxes do not go toward the city.

Mayor Kahl asked for any additional comments from the audience. There was no response.

Mayor Kahl then asked for comments from Council.

Commissioner Decker explained that he would be willing to look at anything as ways to reduce the costs of the water payments. He explained that the Sewer Capital charge is due to the Sewer Upgrade Project that would have been mandated in the future and result in even more expenses. He explained that this is the last City Council meeting before the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall comes to East Peoria. The Wall is coming a week from tomorrow and is set to arrive around 10:00 am. Commissioner Decker is pleased to bring the Wall here is thankful for the support of the City and people in the community. This is not something that they could have done on their own. Bringing the Wall to East Peoria was Justin Hale's idea and Mayor Mingus and Mayor Kahl have been supportive throughout the process. The Wall will be set-up on the Civic Triangle. They are working on lighting the underside of the Wall, and the Wall will be open 24 hours a day during its time here. There is a need for volunteers to find names on the wall. Thursday, September 24 at noon will be an opening ceremony with the Junior ROTC; Ms. Ahrens playing the Star-Spangled Banner; and a posting of colors and welcoming everyone. Speakers at the opening ceremony include Clay Moushon and Medal of Honor recipient Harold Fritz. He encouraged everyone to read the story of Mr. Fritz. Sunday at noon there will be a somber quiet closing ceremony. The Wall will then be dismantled after that time. Commissioner Decker explained that Justin Hale organizes the firefighters for the Peoria Area Honor Flight and any donations above the costs of the wall will go toward the Peoria Area Honor Flight. If there are any questions, Commissioner Decker encouraged individuals to call, text or email him.

Commissioner Hill explained that Friday is the Farmer's Market and Friday Night Lights car event. Commissioner Hill commented on water bills. He explained that it is important for citizens to understand their water bill and the billing cycle. He explained that the comparison that was shown was comparing 6,000 gallons versus 10,000 gallons of usage along with the increase in the rate. Comparing someone who uses 10,000 gallons of water, that person's water bill would go up by between \$11 and \$12. The City offers services, such as (1) water billing employees looking at the usage history over the last couple of years or last year to compare and (2) employees can run a data profile for the citizen. The data profile involves a specialist can come out to someone's home or business and work with the resident to understand if the meter is working. It can show you hourly how much water is going through the meter.

Commissioner Hill explained due to the radio meter reads there are no estimates anymore. The City uses radio frequency to read meters. Whatever amount of water comes across your meter is charged as sewer. He encouraged people to get a meter if it would be beneficial such as watering and filling a pool so that the sewer will not be charged toward that water if it does not go through the sewer. He recommended that people utilize the services that the City offers. A City ordinance set out the sewer capital charge several years ago. The rate for sewer capital will freeze next year. The sewer capital charge will still be there after that for a time. Commissioner Hill explained that the loan started in 2017 and that he would like to understand the loan and the calculation.

Commissioner Sutherland explained that the first major item voted on by the current City Council was the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade low bid approval. He explained that the City would have been mandated and would have been much more costly than the current costs. Commissioner Sutherland explained that he has done his best to prepare everyone to not overload the sewer treatment plant. However, he has not seen anyone disconnect their sump pumps from their house into the sanitary sewer. He explained that if people would stop pumping their sump pumps into the sanitary sewer that it would help prevent future issues. He encouraged the use of services including having the water salesperson come and assist residents in determining if there are any issues. He encouraged people to investigate the water sales if filling pool. Most, if not all, of the increase is due to the sewer amounts. He explained that the city code has been changed to prohibit the Commissioner from changing the water bill subjectively. Commissioner Sutherland explained that the City is not making a profit on the water and sewer system. He encouraged anyone who has questions to contact him.

Commissioner Mingus explained that water bills have been a large topic. He commented on the water bill and explained that the water bills goes up in August; there have been people at home more; there was less rain and people were using more water during the summer. He explained that the sewer capital charge and COVID on top of those things affect the amount. He understands that people and businesses are struggling during COVID. The sewer capital project has to be paid. He agrees with Commissioner Hill and believes that we should look at the fee structure. He encouraged people to contact City Hall if they believe there is a mistake on their water bill or a leak. He encouraged citizens to ask question. Commissioner Mingus commented on an incident involving an 11-year-old boy where a stick went into his neck. He recognized the parents Angie and Luke McConkey who had a major role in saving the life of the 11-year-old, along with the paramedics, firefighters, and police.

Commissioner Decker explained that Luke and Angie controlled the bleeding and kept the boy conscious and saved his life. If not for their actions, the boy would likely have died.

Mayor Kahl commented on the level of services that the City offers. He encouraged everyone to complete their census to be counted. The deadline is September 30. The Census is critical to federal funding and representation so make sure that you get counted. The 30th Anniversary of the FOLEPI River Trail Classic is this year and the even is scheduled for Saturday, November 28, 2020 with staggered start times and social distancing. He encouraged individuals who are interested to get registered. The details about the race are listed on the City's website. Halloween will be allowed for those that would like to participate from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Those that are not interested please turn off your lights.

Mayor Kahl commented on the water bills. He explained that he does not entertain comments too much on social media because misinformation can be taken. He did put out information on the background of the sewer capital rate to inform people about the charge. It was not the intent of the City to run citizens out of the city. Mayor Kahl explained that he voted for the Sewer Treatment Plant Upgrade because the upgrade needed to be done. He explained that he will not kick the can down the road on the need to make the sewer improvements. The sewer treatment plants are not meant to last forever. Mayor Kahl explained that he compared a 10,000-gallon bill that showed an increase between \$11 and \$12 due to the increase in sewer capital charge. The sewer capital charge is what people are referencing the 56% increase. He explained that the City Council when approve the sewer capital charge were presented a 5-, 7-, and 10-year plan. The 7- and 10-year plans would cost the citizens more in the long run. Mayor Kahl explained that the City had to build up a minimum fund prior to starting the project and the total IEPA loan is just under \$42 million. The City must repay the loan, and there is no extension on the loan. The loan is guaranteed to through the repayment by users of the system. There was a 20%, 15%, 11% and now a 10% increase. Mayor Kahl explained that he understands that this is a terrible year with people losing their jobs, getting paid less and other things happening. He explained that he scheduled the water service representative to come out and help him understand the radio frequency and that the radio frequency was 100% accurate and 100% calibrated. He explained that the employee explained how it works and showed water usage back six months by the hour. He explained that his family used 6,000 gallons more in this current billing cycle. It is a twenty-year loan, and Mayor Kahl does not frivolously waste taxpayer funds. East Peoria bills on a two-month cycle, while other water companies may bill on a monthly basis. For comparison, the City of Washington, prior to August 1, had a higher rate than East Peoria. After August 1, the difference is \$9 every two months between City of East Peoria and Washington. He explained that if there is a higher than normal bill, residents should consider whether there is a leak and extra water usage such as watering. The rate increase is the same for everyone. The water rate is \$6.91 per thousand gallons of water; the sewer rate is \$5.76 per thousand gallons; and sewer capital rate is \$3.96 per thousand gallons.

Motion by Commissioner Sutherland, seconded by Commissioner Mingus; Mr. Mayor, I move you that we adjourn until Tuesday evening, October 6, 2020 at 6:00 P.M.

Yeas: Commissioners Decker, Hill, Mingus, Sutherland, and Mayor Kahl.

Nays: None

Mayor Kahl declared the motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:11 P.M.

/s/ Morgan R. Cadwalader
City Clerk Morgan R. Cadwalader