

**ORGANIZATIONAL COMMON COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS OF  
THE CITY OF LADYSMITH**

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

5:15 pm

Rusk County Government Center

Members present: M. Platteter, B. Morgan, B. Groothousen, Gerard Schueller, B. Stoneberg, A. Hraban, M. Reynolds Others present: D. Parker, S. Kavanagh, K. Gorsegner, A. Christianson, Jr., A. Christianson, Sr., Luke Klink, Cora Schultz, Jim West, Kelli Grotzinger, Robert Grotzinger, Rick Nash, Terry Carter, Jon Fields, Kyle Gibbs. Callers on the phone lines: Cindy Pohlman, Chief Kevin Julien, Mike Hraban, John Pohlman.

**Call to Order.** Acting Mayor A. Hraban called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm.

Brief discussion by Atty Kenyon addressing the requirement to have this meeting open to the public and concerned with having to make contact with dispatch to be allowed access into the building. B. Stoneberg blocked the door open to alleviate that concern.

**Oath of Office.** Alan Christianson submitted a letter to the City Council and Clerk declining to take the Oath of Office for the position of Mayor. Dist #2 Bill Morgan, Dist #4 Gerard Schueller, Dist #6 Allen Hraban and Municipal Court Judge Terry Carter took the Oath of Office and were sworn into their new positions.

**Roll Call.** The Clerk took roll call and a quorum was present.

**Pledge of Allegiance.** M. Platteter led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Minutes and Agenda.** Motion by B. Morgan, to approve the April 6, 2020 Council Minutes and the April 21, 2020 Council Agenda, seconded by M. Platteter. Motion carried by voice vote.

**Election of Council President.** Motion by G. Schueller to nominate Marty Reynolds as Council President, seconded by B. Morgan. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote with M. Reynolds abstaining.

**Vacancy of Mayor.** Council President, Marty Reynolds, then presented the next item on the agenda which was discussion and possible action to fill the vacancy of Mayor; to either appoint a person to finish out the term or to hold a special election. Motion by B. Groothousen to adopt Resolution 2020-06 to hold a special election on November 3, 2020 to elect a mayor, seconded by B. Morgan. Motion carried by voice vote.

Atty Kenyon reminded the Council of Ord. 2-2-4 which states that in the absence of the Mayor, the council president will preside at meetings of the City Council and during the absence or inability of the Mayor, shall have the powers and duties of the Mayor. M. Reynolds stated that with the closures due to COVID-19, many small businesses are going to need assistance; there is

a need for workers in our area and with that comes a need for worker housing; our offer to purchase the former elementary school was accepted so planning will need to begin on what to do with that facility and discussions need to continue on adding a VA facility to the new hospital. In light of these projects and many more, he believes a full-time mayor is needed.

Motion by M. Reynolds to nominate Al Christianson, Sr; he is the previous city manager/administrator and I think part of what has to happen with everything that we are looking to be doing I think we need somebody here that can work with the Council and work with businesses in place and can work with elected officials, seconded by B. Groothousen.

M. Reynolds called twice for additional nominations.

Motion by G. Schueller to nominate Al Hraban to serve as Acting Mayor if he is willing to continue to serve as such, seconded by B. Morgan.

M. Reynolds confirmed with Al Christianson, Sr. and Al Hraban if they were both willing to serve as Acting Mayor and they both confirmed they were willing to serve.

It was decided to vote by paper ballot; council members were instructed to write their name on the ballot and then who they were voting for. Doug Parker collected the ballots and the votes came in at 4 votes for Al Hraban and 3 votes for Al Christianson. Al Hraban was approved as Acting Mayor until the General Election on November 3, 2020 when a new mayor will be elected. Clarification was provided that Al Hraban would continue to serve dual roles; he would retain his right to vote as District 6 Alderman and serve as Acting Mayor. He thanked the council and stated he will serve to the best of his abilities.

**District One. M. Platteter:**

Motion by B. Groothousen, seconded by M. Platteter, to approve the paid invoices. M. Reynolds-yes, A. Hraban-yes, B. Stoneberg-yes, G. Schueller-yes, B.Groothousen-yes, B. Morgan-yes, M. Platteter-yes. Motion carried.

**District Two. B. Morgan:**

Motion by B. Morgan to approve the bid from Rhoad's Plumbing to replace the boiler in the Fire Hall for \$10,522.02, seconded by A. Hraban. M. Reynolds-yes, A. Hraban-yes, B. Stoneberg-yes, G. Schueller-yes, B. Groothousen-yes, B. Morgan-yes, M. Platteter-yes. Motion carried.

**District Three. B. Groothousen.**

Due to the COVID-19 closures which includes parks, he thanked Mr. Parker and the Park Board for taking care of cancelling pavilion rentals as part of the Governor's Executive Order. The

Planning Commission did approve, by unanimous vote, John Kenyon's Conditional Use Permit on April 9, 2020 to build a duplex unit.

**Going Paperless.** Discussion of going paperless as a cost savings to the City; reducing staff time needed to compile materials/mailling and cost savings in office supplies/postage. Doug Parker was asked to look into the cost of providing each council member/mayor with an electronic device (laptop or tablet) and the cost of software similar to BoardDocs, which the Ladysmith School District currently uses. Mr. Groothousen stated that now seems to be a very good time to look into this with the need for conducting digital meetings; having software that has the ability to differentiate clearance levels of materials provided to the public, council, administrator may also be helpful.

Atty Kenyon advised council members to use their official city e-mail accounts and avoid having "city business" e-mails delivered to their personal e-mail accounts.

**Development of Strategic Plan.** With the current list of projects that the City is currently working on (i.e., the recently purchased former elementary school, worker housing, the new Public Works garage project and what to do with the former Public Works garage, downtown lots that need to be refurbished, the Methodist Church, creation of new TIF districts and the old hospital site), he asks that the new administrator start stepping the council through the process of creating a strategic plan, setting goals for the city and prioritizing projects. Adm. Christianson suggested taking a look at the 2009-2029 Strategic Plan and making revisions and updates to it.

Atty Kenyon then advised that board members and committee members should also be set up with an "official" city e-mail account in order to avoid the use of personal e-mail accounts for "city business".

**District 4. G. Schueller:**

G. Schueller requested that he not be asked to serve on the Farmer's Market Committee.

**District 5. B. Stoneberg:**

**AED Unit.** The medical emergency that occurred in the Council Chambers about a month ago, brought to light the need to be prepared to assist a person in need of medical care before the ambulance arrives. B. Stoneberg has been in contact with Tom Hall, Rusk County Emergency Government, and he is willing to speak to the council either by video or in person about a defibrillator unit (approx. cost \$1,700). Mr. Hall could also arrange staff/council training on how to operate the unit. B. Groothousen suggested setting up a time (possibly at the next council meeting) to invite Mr. Hall to present more information on the unit and also place the purchase of this unit on the next council agenda for action.

**City Hall Security.** B. Stoneberg requested that a policy be drawn up and put in place where non-city employees are required to access and exit City Hall offices from the front entrance. At this time, former administrator, Al Christianson, was given permission to use the back office to conduct IDC business and is currently using a building key to access the building from the rear entrance. M. Reynolds asked that this item be discussed in the near future.

**District 6. A. Hraban.**

Nothing to report.

**District 7. M. Reynolds.**

Mr. Reynolds is concerned with the negative effect the COVID-19 closures are having on small businesses (taverns, restaurants, shops, etc.) and is hoping that TIF #8 and possibly the IDC can assist these businesses, much like the façade program has. He would like the Community Development Committee to schedule a meeting with TIF #8 businesses in order to hear how their businesses have been impacted with the closures and what is needed in order to continue to operate their business once the closures are lifted. The comment was made that “it is going to be more difficult to replace a business if an existing one closes”.

Atty Kenyon outlined some options for easing the burden on local businesses by possibly reducing the cost of liquor licenses, to delay the due date for real estate property taxes and waive the interest penalties, with the concurrence of the County.

A Community Development meeting will be held on Monday, April 27, 2020 at 5:15 pm at the Rusk County Courthouse-Rusk County Boardroom to hear from small business owners that are located within TID #8 on how they have been impacted and what they need to continue to operate. B. Groothousen has done some research on what other municipalities are doing and it seems that they are using TIF to provide assistance to businesses. Adm Christianson also commented that TIF 8 is set up to provide this type of assistance and by providing funds to small businesses within the district, allowing them to continue to operate, is preventing blight.

**Police & Fire Commission.** Fire Chief K. Gibbs will not be holding any meetings or practices until we get clearance from the State of Wisconsin to do so. The Ladysmith Family Restaurant declined to accept the return of their donation to the Ladysmith Fire Dept and Ladysmith Police Dept. M. Reynolds thanked the Fire Dept and Police Dept. for the service they provide to our community.

Chief K. Julien would like to introduce the newest officer, Renee Stoll, to the council but will wait until the COVID-19 closures are lifted. He reported that she has completed her fifth week and has already shown to be a great addition to the Ladysmith Police Department.

**Administrator Report.** Mr. Christianson asked that during the Community Development meeting, that the possibility of deferring special assessments be discussed. He also encouraged supporting local small businesses by purchasing gift certificates now to be used in the future. The purchase of the former elementary school should be closed by July 1<sup>st</sup>; purchase price was \$1 along with exchange of a city-owned parcel of land along Hwy 8 that fronts the school property. He will start part-time office hours on Monday, April 27 and full-time hours beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Public Works Report.** K. Gorsegner clarified that Change Order #3 has been broken down into 3 separate change orders #4, #5 and #6.

- #4 Cost of adding a steel beam above a door opening after the removal of two windows and discovering the absence of a beam. \$1,665.50
- #5 Instead of tiling the bathroom shower area and for handicap accessible issues, it was decided to place an epoxy coating over the entire bathroom floor. \$557.00
- #6 Engineers spec'd out the crane footing to be 2" lower than the ceiling joist in the building but with the heat/steam pipes staying in place the crane needs to be cut down by 14". The cost to transport the crane back to Waukesha for modifications and redelivered to Ladysmith is an additional \$2,900 which the engineers have agreed to split.

It was clarified that the estimate to move the heating pipes was more expensive than having the crane modified. Motion by A. Hraban, seconded by B. Stoneberg, to approve Change Orders 4, 5 and 6 in the amount of \$3,672.50. M. Platteter-yes, B. Morgan-yes, B. Groothousen-yes, G. Schueller-no, B. Stoneberg-yes, A. Hraban-yes, M. Reynolds-yes. Motion carried.

K. Gorsegner also informed the council that the 5<sup>th</sup> Street/Gates Ave project has been started; the site is wet and sloppy as expected.

The PW crew will be back to work on April 27 and "social distancing" measures have been put in place.

**Licenses and Permits.** Motion by M. Reynolds, seconded by G. Schueller, to approve the Operator License for Aaron O'Bryan. Motion carried by voice vote.

**Mayor's Forum.** Council members were asked to review the 2020-2021 Council/Committee Handbook and make any suggestions prior to the next council meeting.

Motion by M. Reynolds, seconded by B. Stoneberg, to adjourn at 6:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Shari Kavanagh, City Clerk

