

City of Olivet
Regular Session Minutes
December 14, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
This meeting was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council Call to Order

Present: Mayor Laura Barlund-Maas, Gary Peterson, Joe Hoffdahl, Steve Penny, James Frohm, Pam Steward-Bess, Don Walker.

Mayor Barlund-Maas recognized visitors

Eaton County Commissioner Jim Mott indicated that budget-wise the County was doing well. The County had received \$355,000.00 from the CARES Act to utilize on COVID-19 expenditures. They have also been implementing cost-cutting measures. The County had cut back to a four-day work week, but returned to a five-day work week in October.

Mott stated that the City of Grand Ledge was planning to expand its wastewater treatment plant. The expansion would affect Fitzgerald Park, but is not expected to affect the Ledges. Grand Ledge does not have any other space available and expects residents will not be in support changes to the park. Eaton County leases the park from the City of Grand Ledge. Normally the lease on the park is renewed every ten years, but under the circumstances, they are anticipating a two-year lease as changes are expected.

Mott indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic has hit Eaton County hard. Mott expects we will continue to follow state guidelines closely, including wearing masks, distancing, and holding Zoom meetings for much of 2021.

Approval of Agenda

MOTION by Hoffdahl, supported by Penny, to approve the agenda. Motion carried 7-0.

Approval of Previous Minutes

MOTION by Walker, supported by Hoffdahl, to approve the November 2020 minutes as presented. Motion carried 7-0.

Mayor Barlund-Maas stated that the remainder of the votes would be taken by roll call.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Proposed Dates for 2021 Council Meetings – Action Item

Proposed City Council regular meeting dates were provided in Council packets. The meetings will remain on the second Monday of each month.

MOTION by Steward-Bess, supported by Penny, to approve the proposed 2021 Council Meeting dates as presented. Motion carried 7-0. ***

B. PA-116 Agreement-Webb-Poyer – Action Item

Mayor Barlund-Maas explained the PA-116 Farmland Preservation Program application for 76.73 acres located on W. Butterfield Highway needs the City Council's approval because the property is located within three miles of the Olivet city boundary. The owners of the property, Steven Webb and Jodi Poyer are Vermontville residents. The property is in Walton Township and the township has already approved the PA116 application.

MOTION by Penny, supported by Frohm, to approve the Webb-Poyer, PA116 Farmland Preservation Program application for the acreage listed above on W. Butterfield Hwy. Motion carried 7-0. ***

C. Employee Holiday Bonuses – Action Item

The City Council discussed holiday bonuses for all employees. In recent years, all full-time employees have received one paid full-day floating holiday, and part-time employees have received a paid half-day floating holiday. Fire fighters instead each received a \$25 gift certificate to White Tail Farms Market. Council discussed maintaining the full and half-day floating paid holiday for full and part-time employees and increasing the Fire Department personnel gift certificates to \$35. There are currently approximately 24 fire fighters.

MOTION by Penny, supported by Walker, to approve the employee holiday bonuses and firefighter gift certificates as presented. Motion carried 7-0. ***

D. Property Tax Poverty Exemption Resolution 20-06 – Action Item

Mayor Barlund-Maas stated that the proposed resolution states that the City Assessor and the Board of Review will follow the policy and federal guidelines in granting and denying exemptions unless the City Assessor and the Board of Review determine that there are substantial and compelling reasons for the deviation. This exemption is updated annually with changes to the monetary values as provided by the Assessor.

MOTION by Walker, supported by Steward-Bess, to approve Resolution 20-06 to establish the 2021 Property Tax Poverty Exemption as written. Motion carried 7-0. ***

E. County Designated Assessor Agreement – Action Item

Clerk/Treasurer Huepenbecker stated that Public Act 660 of 2018 - the County Designated Assessor Agreement is an amendment to the General Property Tax Act (Public Act 206 of 1893). The Michigan State Tax Commission now requires that another qualified individual must be appointed to serve as the designated assessor of record should the Assessor fail to meet the Audit of Minimum Assessing Requirements (AMAR), and the Assessor/City fails to remedy that failure within two attempts. At that time the designated assessor would assume responsibility. The appointment must be completed by December 31, 2020, or the State Tax Commission will appoint a person to serve the County and all local governments within the County.

Huepenbecker spoke with both John Fuentes, Eaton County Controller/Administrator, and Randy Jewell, Olivet City Assessor, about the agreement. Fuentes expressed that the County would like to appoint Tim Vandermark, of the Equalization and Property Description department as the designee for Eaton County rather than have the State appoint one for them. Neither Fuentes nor Jewell could find any negatives to having Vandermark as the designated assessor. Both believe the need to call on this person is unlikely and would only be used in an emergency situation.

The County is required to have a majority approval of the local governments to move forward in the process.

MOTION by Frohm, supported by Penny, to approve the County Designated Assessor Agreement as written. Motion carried 7-0. ***

F. Tree Bids – Action Item

Mayor Barlund-Maas reminded the Council that at the November meeting, Director of Public Works Jerry Staggs was asked to get additional bids for needed tree work. Staggs reported that he had approached a number of contractors and received two responses. He received nearly identical proposals from Top to Bottom Tree Service and James Clark Tree Service. Staggs indicated that they were they big trees and that there are a lot of utility wires to work around.

Commissioner Steve Penny identified a bid discrepancy. The bid from James Clark Tree Service included removal of five trees. Staggs identified it as an error as they had only discussed four trees. The proposals included four large trees and the proposal for Clark also included a large limb that overhangs Butterfield Hwy.

Commissioner Walker asked about the monetary comparison between Ayles and the James Clark bid. Staggs stated that the James Clark bid was less expensive.

MOTION by Peterson, supported by Penny, to hire James Clark Tree Service to complete the tree trimming and removal as presented for an amount not to exceed \$4,800.00. Motion carried 7-0. ***

G. Fire Department Purchase-Valves and Additional Repairs-EVS – Action Item

Fire Chief John Collins stated that during Emergency Vehicle Service's (EVS) pump maintenance and testing, it was found that additional items, including valves, were in need of repair. Collins stated that the City has not yet received the invoice, but there is money in the budget for these unplanned repairs.

MOTION by Walker, supported by Penny, to approve the Fire Department purchase of valves and additional repairs as presented for an amount not to exceed \$2,600.00. Motion carried 7-0. ***

H. Fire Department Purchase-811 Hose Bed Cover – Action Item

Fire Commissioner Walker explained the need for the purchase of the 811 Hose Bed Cover. The cover would be made by Eaton Custom Sewing and Embroidery. This company is local and has done similar sewing and repair for other fire departments.

MOTION by Frohm, supported by Walker, to approve the purchase of the 811 Hose Bed Cover as presented for an amount not to exceed \$1350.00. Motion carried 7-0. ***

Approval of the Bills

MOTION by Steward-Bess, supported by Hoffdahl, to pay the bills as presented. Motion carried 7-0.

Department Head Reports

Police Chief Shawn Garcia – Garcia was absent.

DPW Director Jerry Staggs – Staggs informed Council that the City had already experienced some trouble with individuals climbing on the fence causing minor damage at the foot bridge. He would like to stabilize the fencing and said it may be necessary to put a camera on the bridge. Staggs informed Council that Ron Smith had moved on to his appointment as the Calhoun County Water Resource Commissioner. Staggs and Mayor Barlund-Maas had completed interviews to fill the open position. David King, an individual with experience in tractor repair, was hired. Staggs added that the DPW had been working on getting the plow truck ready for the winter ahead. Staggs indicated that Chail Gentile had taken another water test and was waiting on the results to date.

Fire Chief John Collins – Collins had nothing further to add.

Clerk/Treasurer Amy Huepenbecker – Huepenbecker stated that everything they planned to spend the monies on from the CARES grant was being purchased, including the laptops that some of the council members and department heads were using for this meeting. She thanked Chief Garcia for his assistance in the set-up of the laptops and with the operational print outs he provided and said that an IT Right representative had come to help with the final set-up. The Fire Department was also purchasing a washer and dryer for the station using the CARES grant.

Huepenbecker said the winter property tax bills had gone out and payments were already coming in. She stated the quarterly utility billing process starts this week. She wished everyone happy holidays and hoped they all could enjoy time with their families.

Commissioner Comments

Joe Hoffdahl – Hoffdahl expressed his appreciation for everyone's hard work for the City.

Pam Steward-Bess – Steward-Bess expressed her thanks to Clerk/Treasurer Huepenbecker and Chief Garcia for their work on the laptops. She also extended her good wishes for all to have happy holidays and to remain safe.

Gary Peterson – Peterson wished everyone happy holidays.

Steve Penny – Penny stated that Officer Bailey has left the Olivet Police Department for employment elsewhere. The Police department is now looking for another officer to fill that position. Chief Garcia could not attend tonight's meeting due to a death in his family. Penny would like to send something to Garcia and his family on behalf of the City. Any donations could be given to Penny or Clerk/Treasurer Huepenbecker. Penny also acknowledged that it had been a trying year and thanked the Mayor Barlund-Maas and Huepenbecker for keeping the City going during the pandemic. He was grateful for the CARES ACT grant, stating that the laptops were an especially nice feature to have available.

James Frohm – Frohm proposed naming the newly finished walking bridge "Danny's Bridge." Discussion took place. It was noted that any Council decision would have to be listed on a meeting agenda to provide notice to the public prior to a vote. Parks Commissioner Steward-Bess suggested to have the information ready for the January or February meeting. Steward-Bess and Frohm would collaborate in the effort to move the process forward.

Don Walker – Walker acknowledged that the past eleven months had not been good due to the pandemic, so the Council had only been able to meet in person three months this past year. He is hopeful the Council would be able to come together again before the end of his term. Mayor Barlund-Maas reminded him that he could always run again.

Laura Barlund-Maas – Barlund-Maas extended her wishes for everyone to enjoy the remainder of 2020. She is ready for a fresh start and seeing what 2021 brings.

Meeting Adjourned at 07:39 p.m.

Laura Barlund-Maas, Mayor

Amy Huepenbecker, Clerk/Treasurer

*** Roll call vote was taken.