

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND  
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION  
January 28, 2019 - 5:30 p.m.**

**City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor  
1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL**

Present: Mayor Mike Thoms, Alderman Ivory D. Clark, Alderman Virgil J. Mayberry, Alderman Stephen L. Tollenaer, and Alderman Dylan Parker

Alderman James Spurgetis arrived at 5:35 p.m. Alderman Dave Geenen arrived at 5:42 p.m. Alderman Joshua Schipp arrived at 6:42 p.m.

Staff: City Manager Randy Tweet, City Attorney Dave Morrison, City Clerk Judith Gilbert, and other City staff

1/28/2019 - Minutes

**PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT: 2019 ACTION PLAN**

Parks and Recreation Department Director John Gripp thanked Council for their time so he could share the direction for 2019. The Action Plan is where the department is going. It's a strategic plan with measurable goals to help the department prioritize its efforts for the next one to three years. The Action Plan provides a focus to accomplish the goals. Mr. Gripp said it provides a unified vision that they can articulate for residents, their customers, and for staff and also what they're trying to accomplish.

Assistant Director Todd Winter explained how the action plan was designed. Input sources used were the Ballard\*King Operational Audit (2015), the 2009 Master Plan (Bi-State Regional Commission), past and current Council goals, and feedback from community and user surveys. They looked at recent experiences and changes within the City and the department including the Parks reorganization with Public Works and the new realities with the City. Input also came from annual recreation and facility reviews and goal setting. Mr. Winter explained that three years ago, they started analyzing programs by life cycle stages and setting goals. Using that business-minded approach helped them to identify and drill down to five key areas of focus.

Mr. Winter reviewed the first goal of designing and implementing a department brand including updating the mission statement; developing core values and supporting statements; and developing a promotional campaign and tying in with the "This Town Rocks" City campaign slogan (This Town Rocks Recreation).

Mr. Gripp said another area of focus for the Action Plan is to develop a Capital Improvement and Operations Plan. He explained that would include creating a capital project priority list (they know it will be a long list); continue utilizing alternative funding to build upon and supplement gaming funds; developing a long-term plan for parks and facility maintenance with Public Works (developing a plan for each location with public input); and utilizing a park classification system to develop a plan for each park. Mr. Gripp said there are different types of parks from type 1 parks such as Whitewater Junction and Schwiebert Riverfront Park to quiet parks in the neighborhoods. He stated all parks are important.

Mr. Winter stated they want to continue the Douglas Park rehabilitation. He said this is a key

project and several City departments have a stake in the Douglas Park project including Public Works, Police, Community and Economic Development, and Information Technology as well as various groups such as Friends of Douglas Park. Mr. Winter said they believe the rehabilitation of Douglas Park has the potential to transform the neighborhood.

Mr. Winter said the fourth and fifth areas of focus are to create and execute recreation and facilities plans. Building off their annual review and analysis that they do, they want to build a five-year program plan for each recreation programming division. This would include using their core values they built and updating policy manuals so that programs are responsible, sustainable, and within their mission. Mr. Winter said the fifth area of focus is along the same lines: creating and executing enterprise facility plans; and developing five-year plans for Whitewater Junction, RIFAC, Highland Springs and Saukie. These facilities are self-sustaining so they must make sure to take a business-minded and analytic approach to how they operate these facilities. Mr. Winter said they want to develop a long-term plan to make sure they are sustainable well into the future. They recognize they have some aging amenities and facilities that will need some improvements in the near future. They will need to prioritize those improvements and make sure there is a plan to complete them.

Mr. Gripp reviewed the next steps: set deadlines; create a task force for certain goals made up of community residents and staff; schedule park walk-throughs with Public Works, community groups and staff; set meetings with staff to get buy-in to the plan and goals; and schedule community surveys and focus group meetings so the community is part of the process on an annual basis.

Mr. Winter said the Action Plan document will be in their Summer Activity Guide, made into a poster to display at facilities for staff and the public to see, and also put out on social media.

Alderman Spurgetis asked if there had been any discussion about having fewer parks with less maintenance and less expenses. Mr. Gripp said there had been such discussions in the past; all of them negative. He said they are looking for partnerships within their parks to offset some of the costs. He gave the example of the restoration of cannons and the improved baseball offerings at Mel McKay Park. Alderman Geenen asked Mr. Gripp if Rock Island has more parks per capita than other Quad Cities communities. Mr. Gripp responded yes. Alderman Geenen said he does not see that as a negative; he feels that it's an investment.

Alderman Tollenaer thanked Mr. Gripp and Mr. Winter for what they do every day especially the golf courses which are done very well. Alderman Tollenaer asked about taking over the Rock Island Arsenal golf course. Mr. Gripp said they were looking for someone to do basic maintenance for the course until someone took it over. Mr. Gripp said they wanted it done for next to nothing. The Parks Department could not afford to do that. Discussion continued on that matter.

Alderman Geenen asked if Two Rivers YMCA was moving into Rock Island. Mr. Gripp replied they have been in contact with the YMCA regarding a couple of possible locations, but they do not see it as a threat. If possible, they will work together.

Alderman Mayberry asked how much more work needs to be done at Douglas Park before the NFL Draft comes at the end of April. Mr. Gripp responded the draft is going to be held at Augustana College due to the weather and there could be thousands attending the event. He added there is NFL history at Augustana too. The NFL requirements made it necessary to hold it at Augustana and Mr. Gripp said if the event was held at Douglas Park, it would tear up the field. Mr. Gripp will be meeting with NFL representatives in February. Mr. Winter said they will be using the NFL event to drive more interest in Douglas Park. Alderman Parker encouraged Mr. Gripp and Mr. Winter to put their graphic info sheet out on social media and promote it.

Mr. Winter emphasized that every individual park will have a long-term plan. Mr. Gripp cautioned that some very old amenities that can't be immediately repaired should be removed until the department can come up with a plan. Alderman Clark commended the Parks Department.

## **COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: CED PERMIT FEES**

Community and Economic Development Director Chandler Poole said they were going to discuss permitting fees for the CED Department. He said the fees were last updated in 2009; it has been ten years. Mr. Poole presented an example of the current fee structure for a new residential home, reviewing the fees for plumbing, mechanical, electrical, and plan review. Mr. Poole said the calculation process is very convoluted. The staff considered how to make it easier for all and to bring the City's fees into the mix. He reviewed the proposed fee formula for the new residential construction. Alderman Parker asked why the plumbing fee schedule will remain the same. Tim Delathower, Plumbing Inspector, responded that plumbing fees are based on the number of openings; currently, it is \$11 per opening. He said they are proposing to go to \$13 per opening.

Mr. Poole presented comparisons of his example with other communities' fee structure: Rock Island County, Moline, East Moline, Milan, Bettendorf, and Davenport. He compared the proposed new fee of approximately \$2,900 for the example to the other communities which puts Rock Island in the mix. He noted that the other communities have more recently updated their fees. Mr. Poole explained that Moline has the most expensive fees of approximately \$5,600 for the example because they charge a 1% fee for a security deposit to ensure completion of the project. Mr. Poole said that 1% fee is returned when the project gets a certificate of occupancy.

Alderman Parker asked why the Illinois communities are so much more expensive than Iowa communities. Mr. Poole responded that they believe it's based on volume. The community of Bettendorf for example, has more new housing starts. Mr. Delathower said they tried breaking down the fees of other communities where there is more variation. Alderman Mayberry asked for clarification regarding the dates in the handout. Mayor Thoms said the City hasn't updated fees since 2009.

Mr. Poole then presented an example with fees for a commercial project and reviewed the details. He presented a comparison with the other communities. Mr. Poole next discussed reinspection fees which have also not been updated since 2009. The building, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical reinspection fees will all be brought up to \$55.00 per hour. He presented a comparison of the reinspection fees with other communities. Alderman Geenen asked where the extra revenue goes; for example in the CED General Fund. Mr. Poole replied the extra revenue will go into the permit fees fund.

Mr. Poole discussed utility turn on fees; the current fee is \$27.50 for both gas and electric utility turn on. He explained that other cities charge for each permit. The department is proposing to raise the fee to \$55 per permit inspection for each utility. Mr. Poole said they issued 119 utility turn on permits in 2018 with an average of 2.5 inspections per permit. He explained they are trying to cover their costs. Mayor Thoms asked if those were just for new construction or other situations too. Mr. Delathower responded that it is a MidAmerican requirement if the gas or electric has been off for six months or more. The owner is required to pull the permit; the City completes the inspection; and then MidAmerican restores service. Mr. Poole presented a comparison of the utility turn on permit fees.

Mr. Poole presented the different health inspection fees which were also last updated in 2009 and the proposed new fees. Brian Tauke is the City Health Inspector. Alderman Geenen asked if applications can be taken online or through an app or do people have to come to City Hall for permits. Mr. Delathower responded that applications can be done by mail; they are mostly done

in person. He said they are looking at online applications. Mr. Poole said that it is nice when contractors or homeowners come in so the project can be discussed with staff. Alderman Mayberry asked why the utility turn on fee is so low compared to other communities. Mr. Poole replied the fees have not been updated since 2009. Mr. Poole explained they are proposing the fees be raised to \$55 per turn on permit which makes the City's fees more comparable to other communities.

Alderman Spurgetis noted that with the utility turn on proposed fee of \$55 it is a big jump to the top and more than the other Illinois communities. Mr. Poole said they are trying to keep the numbers consistent with \$55 as with the reinspection proposed fee. Mr. Poole said they would like to bring an ordinance to Council with the increased fees and streamline the process for permits. Alderman Spurgetis said he is for raising revenue, but he doesn't want the City at the top end when people are making comparisons between communities.

Alderman Parker asked if going to 1% of the project cost is how the other communities charge. Mr. Delathower said yes, some communities charge that way, but they don't give a break after the \$300,000 cost as Rock Island is proposing. Alderman Parker asked what the impact of the increased fees will have on the General Fund. Mr. Poole replied it is difficult to calculate. Alderman Parker asked if there is an estimate of projected revenue. Mr. Delathower responded they tried to analyze that; last year, they issued over 3,000 permits and all varied. He explained projects vary from year to year but they should benefit from the number of upcoming commercial projects.

Alderman Parker asked if they had met with the homebuilders association or general contractors regarding the proposed increase in fees. Mr. Delathower said they have not had any meetings, but he has talked with several contractors. Alderman Geenen asked if it will be coming to Council for a vote. City Manager Randy Tweet said if Council wants to move forward with it, it will come to Council via ordinance. Alderman Geenen said he would only feel comfortable if the department reached out to private industry and got feedback regarding the proposed fees. Alderman Parker said the biggest grievance regarding the sprinkler issue was that there was no communication with the industry on the change. He asked that the department reach out and share what they are considering. Mr. Delathower said they can do that.

## **COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: INTRODUCTION TO FORM BASED CODES**

Mr. Poole said they are going to give Council an introduction to form-based codes which have been around for about fifteen years. He introduced Alan Fries who has been with the City for almost 38 years and Miles Brainard who has been with the City for a year and a half.

Mr. Fries reviewed what conventional zoning is. It is hierarchical and deals with uses rather than form. He said most zoning codes are intended to ensure public health, safety, and welfare. He explained that conventional zoning is regulation of land uses which are separated into zoning districts rather than form or design. Each zone has different uses and rules and regulation. He said common tools are building setbacks or the distance where buildings can be on the property and separation of structures, height restrictions, buffer yards, landscaping requirements, signage and parking, and the variance application process through the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Mr. Fries said conventional zoning does not regulate design. He presented a zoning map showing the nineteen zoning districts. He explained B-1 or a Neighborhood Business District is the most restrictive with limiting the size of the structure and limited to retail or service use. The Zoning Code also includes other uses if authorized by the Board of Zoning Appeals and includes setbacks for the different zoning districts. Mr. Fries said there is some other regulation of land

development and that it is in the City's Comprehensive Plan which was last updated and approved in 2014. The Comprehensive Plan also focuses on other areas such as economic development, land development, housing, transportation, and other issues. Mr. Fries said in the plan, it does consider that in one of the land uses in some areas of the city, that form-based codes could be used.

Mr. Brainard discussed the origins of form-based codes. They were a response to urban sprawl and began as a discussion among planners starting in the late 1990s as an alternative to conventional zoning. He said it was invented collectively over time by different practitioners and academics and was formalized by the Form-Based Code Institute which formed in 2004. Mr. Brainard emphasized the most important part of the definition of form-based codes is that it is a regulation; it is not a guideline or optional. He presented visual depictions of conventional zoning, zoning with design guidelines, and form-based code design which encourages a mixture of uses, buildings close to the front lines of parcels, and landscaping.

Mr. Brainard presented the five main elements of form-based codes: a regulating plan or written plan with what the zoning means; public standards such as the design of streetscape is important; building standards with features, configurations, and functions of buildings and not just uses (more about how it looks and is situated on the site); administration or how things are done; and definitions or what things mean. Mr. Brainard said there are two types of form-based code. One is a full scale form-based code that covers an entire city. The other is a form-based code overlay district that covers specific areas of a city such as downtown, commercial corridors, and neighborhoods.

Mr. Brainard said Peoria adopted the Heart of Peoria Form-Based Code in 2010 which covers specific neighborhoods, business areas, the downtown, and the warehouse district. They used overlay districts in certain areas only. Mr. Brainard said there is much more detail in form-based code such as an RBL or required building line and there is a required facade percentage at the RBL. Form-based code is pedestrian-oriented with no parking in front of buildings, story height restrictions, and the parking much less visible. Form-based codes also include regulations on the spacing of doors and windows as well as standards for balconies and awnings. Mr. Brainard said the regulations also specify what can be on the ground floor versus the second and third floors. He added there are very detailed regulations.

Mr. Brainard reviewed the pros and cons of form-based codes. The pros are walkability and an improved pedestrian experience; the code ensures a higher standard of design so things look better; it encourages a sensible mix of land versus conventional zoning which separates out uses and has no overlap; and it is more ecological friendly because of the emphasis on landscaping. Form-based codes have a greener approach to development making things more compact versus sprawling. The cons are that it is more costly to developers because they cannot use their traditional site plan; it can be difficult to implement when there is little development pressure (if there is more competition with businesses, form-based codes are easier to implement); the higher costs of improvements in public right-of-ways; and more city administrative oversight is required as there are more details for staff to oversee.

Mr. Brainard explained that the City's Zoning Ordinance is being updated and in its third year of the process. They are trying to wrap it up as quickly as they can. The current ordinance does not have any form-based code elements. Mr. Brainard said it would be too costly to start the re-write over again or add in more additions. He said there are many alternatives to form-based code to achieve similar aesthetic ends with improved landscaping requirements, additional rules about pedestrian connection at sites and design standard overlays in specific target parts of town which would produce similar products without going full bore into form-based code. Mr. Brainard said the City does not know what the public wants. He stated that form-based code requires an extraordinary amount of public engagement. He added the City of Peoria's process took ten years.

Alderman Spurgetis asked what happens to the variance request procedure for zoning issues. Mr. Brainard responded that variances are seldom granted with form-based code; it is a much more restrictive process. The point is to force a certain sort of form in the urban landscape. Alderman Spurgetis asked if it's a certain look that is wanted where everything looks the same. Mr. Brainard replied that a form-based code does not regulate architectural style; it is more about the materials choices. The goal is not to make every street look the same, but instead it is more about the "street room" or the outside space or creating a particular atmosphere. Form-based code is not about having all of the buildings with the same facade.

Alderman Spurgetis said that given the state of the City's economy and trying to get more business to come, he was concerned about the cons of form-based code and trying to fit into a strict mold. Mr. Brainard said as a planner, he wants high quality urban form and there will always be situations where turning someone down because what they're proposing will have a long-term negative impact on the urban form might be the right choice. He added that at the same time he is concerned about attracting and growing a business community that grows the local economy. He believes in looking at some of the alternatives and in some areas of town, there should be a higher standard of design such as the College Hill area or downtown. He said at the end of the day, it's up to Council and the public to make that cost-benefit analysis. Alderman Spurgetis asked if it was something that could be phased in over the long-term. Mr. Brainard responded by reviewing the example of Peoria. In 2003, Peoria produced a community plan with public engagement; in 2010, Peoria finally drafted and adopted form-based code. Mr. Brainard said now in 2019, you can see the form-based code in action in their warehouse district. He said it's about giving it appropriate time and room to unfold on its own.

Alderman Mayberry said he believed it came in after the casino left downtown Peoria; he wanted to know if staff wants to change the look of downtown Rock Island. He also asked if it was required to join the Institute or pay them money to implement form-based code. Mr. Brainard responded no, you do not have to pay the Institute money. He said there are a lot of consultants that can be hired to write form-based code. He further explained the urban form of form-based code already exists in downtown; it's about preserving and enhancing what the city has and the atmosphere. He said it was more about preservation and keeping the good you already have.

Alderman Parker thanked staff; he has been pushing this conversation since he became an alderman. He asked what the status of the zoning ordinance update is. Mr. Brainard replied they are nearly finished with Phase 3 of the contract which is the delivery of a full draft of the updated ordinance including a draft of the zoning map and a draft of the sign ordinance. He spoke with Ancel Glink last week and is waiting on a timeline from them for the last parts of the drafts. Mr. Brainard said the next stage would be for the drafts to go to the Planning Commission and to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Alderman Parker asked if the Planning and Preservation Commissions have been enlisted for their input. Mr. Brainard responded not at this time because there isn't enough for them to review yet; they need the full draft and the map.

Alderman Parker asked if any of the neighboring communities in the Quad Cities are pursuing form-based code. Mr. Brainard replied not to his knowledge. Alderman Parker said he likes the mixed use of form-based codes. He wanted to know if there is a way to encourage mixed-use development without form-based code. Mr. Brainard said some communities have re-written their ordinance to encourage or allow mixed use such as in the downtown. Traditionally, conventional zoning has separated uses with a boundary line for residential areas and different density zones.

Alderman Parker asked where does staff propose the City should go from here. He said the master plan has already identified areas where the aesthetic should be preserved. He would like to see more design requirements for pedestrian standards. Mr. Brainard said there needs to be more input from more people; staff does not take a particular position one way or the other. He

explained that to adopt form-based code would be a serious fundamental change for the city and should not be done without public input. He said most communities hire a consultant which is a costly investment; it could not be done in-house.

Mr. Tweet said the purpose of the presentation was to educate Council and find out if they want staff to pursue form-based code; if not, they can look at other options. Alderman Parker said it doesn't have to be form-based code, but it needs to be more than what the City currently has. He requests putting forth a plan which identifies design requirements, pedestrian connections, etc. and soliciting feedback. Mr. Brainard offered that staff can do more research on alternatives and what other communities have done. Alderman Parker said the major concern in attracting development is they don't want to lose the landscaping and the density to attract younger people who want to live in walkable communities.

Mayor Thoms thanked Mr. Fries and Mr. Brainard for their presentation.

The study session concluded at 6:43 p.m.

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Judith H. Gilbert, City Clerk