

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

City Hall

1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island IL

City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor

2/22/2021 - Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

2. This meeting will be conducted by audio and video conference without a physically present quorum of the Rock Island City Council due to the disaster declaration issued by Governor Pritzker

3. Roll Call

Mayor Thoms asked Interim City Clerk Linda Mohr to call the roll.

Present: Mayor Mike Thoms, Alderman Randy Hurt, Alderwoman Jenni Swanson, and Alderman Mark Poulos.

Alderman Ivory D. Clark, Alderman James Spurgetis, Alderman Dylan Parker, and Alderman Dave Geenen were present via remote connection in accordance with Governor Pritzker's Executive Order.

Absent: None.

Staff: City Manager Randy Tweet, Interim City Clerk Linda Mohr, and other City staff.

4. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Thoms led in the saying of the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. Moment of Silence

Mayor Thoms requested a moment of silence. A moment of silence was observed.

6. Public Comment

Mayor Thoms asked if any residents wished to speak via remote connection. No residents volunteered to speak.

7. Minutes from the February 8th, 2021 City Council Meeting.

MOTION:

Alderman Clark moved to approve the minutes as printed; Alderman Spurgetis seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

8. Update Rock Island by Mayor Thoms

The City of Rock Island is hiring – There are several job openings for various seasonal, full and part time positions within the City. All job postings and job descriptions are available by clicking the Employment tab on the City's website at rigov.org. Select the 'Job Search & Online Application' link to find opportunities to join the Finance, Parks, Fire and Public Works Departments.

The Rock Island Public Library Children's Department will host a virtual show-and-tell about pets via Zoom at 6:00 pm on Thursday, February 25.

Each participant will have time to share details about their pet, its name, and what makes it special. The event is for children in grades K through 6th and their families. Registration is due by noon on February 24 and a link to the online Zoom meeting will be sent to registered participants. To sign up, visit the library calendar at www.rockislandlibrary.org or call 309-732-7360.

Rock Island Public Library and Prairie State Legal Services will host a free virtual presentation on the criminal record expungement process at 5:30 pm on Wednesday, March 3. The presentation will be offered via Zoom. Registration is required.

Attendees will learn about record expungement, sealing of criminal records in Illinois, and other forms of criminal records relief and Prairie State Legal Services will provide a brief overview of their available services.

To register, visit the calendar at www.rockislandlibrary.org or call 309-732-7341 for assistance. The Zoom link will be emailed to registered participants. For those unable to attend by Zoom, the presentation will be posted afterwards to the Rock Island Public Library YouTube channel.

Tax preparation assistance - The Martin Luther King Center is a site for United Way's VITA program, which offers free tax preparation assistance for Quad Citizens with a household income of \$57,000 a year or less. Hours are 5-8 pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and 9 am to noon on Saturdays. Appointments are required. Schedule your appointment by calling 563-355-9900 or dialing 2-1-1.

9. A Special Ordinance vacating a section of alley right-of-way between 9th and 10th Streets, south of 4th Avenue. (Second Reading)

MOTION:

Alderman Hurt moved to approve the Ordinance; Alderman Clark seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

10. Claims

- a. Report from the Human Resources Department regarding payment to Ms. Mary Cutkomp in the amount of \$5,299.86 for a General Liability Claim.
- b. Report from the Human Resources Department regarding payment to State Farm Insurance in the amount of \$4,119.77 for a General Liability Claim.
- c. Report from the Human Resources Department regarding payment to Pappas & Wright, P.C., Rock Island, IL for legal services rendered during the month of January, 2021.

MOTION:

Alderman Spurgetis moved to approve Claims Items A through C; Alderman Hurt seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

11. Claims for the week of February 5th through February 11th, 2021 in the amount of \$1,108,353.32; the week of February 12th through February 18th, 2021 in the amount of \$582,282.47; and payroll for the weeks of January 25th through February 7th, 2021 in the amount of \$1,558,622.55.

MOTION:

Alderman Swanson moved to allow the claims and payroll; Alderman Poulos seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

12. Report from the Public Works Department regarding the 24th Street Water Tower Retaining Wall Removal and Storm Sewer Improvements, recommending the bid be awarded to Valley Construction, Rock Island, IL for the amount of \$227,383.40.

MOTION:

Alderman Poulos moved to approve the bid as recommended; Alderman Swanson seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Alderman Parker recused himself from this vote due to the nature of his employment.

13. Report from the Public Works Department regarding the Levee Maintenance Riprap Placement Project, recommending the bid be awarded to Langman Construction, Inc., Rock Island, IL for the amount of \$125,350.60.

MOTION:

Alderman Geenen moved to accept the bid as recommended; Alderman Spurgetis seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Alderman Parker recused himself from this vote due to the nature of his employment.

14. Report from the Community and Economic Development Department regarding the Illinois Housing Development Authority's Strong Communities Grant in the amount of \$175,000.00 and the required resolution to be submitted to the State.

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to adopt the resolution as recommended, authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to sign the Certificate of Incumbency, and authorize the City Manager to sign any future agreements subject to minor attorney modifications; Alderman Poulos seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

15. Report from the Mayor's office recommending amendments to the Alcoholic Liquor Ordinance, eliminating Section 3-9, paragraph 1b titled, Extended Hours, three o'clock a.m. option and amending two related paragraphs, specifically Section 3-5, paragraph 10 regarding Annual Training Sessions and Section 3-5, paragraph 11 regarding recording systems.

MOTION:

Alderwoman Swanson moved to consider the ordinance changes; Alderman Poulos seconded.

City Attorney Dave Morrison asked for clarification on the motion, and Alderwoman Swanson confirmed. Alderman Parker said the measure has been an ongoing process, and ultimately there is a consensus that the issues are public safety and downtown bar closing times. He said this is not necessary and a distraction from what needs to be done. He noted any decision would be premature, as Council had yet to identify how to pay for the recommended changes from Staff. He said many Task Force members had focused on how to make the downtown area more attractive and safe as opposed to a closing time. He hoped after the vote Council members would engage in discussions with Staff and himself to identify ways to invest in the downtown. He added one of the businesses in his constituency have closed due to the pandemic.

Alderman Hurt said safety is the top concern for the District area, and the subject has been difficult to weigh. He added some measures could be put into place in order to make the decision easier, including increased lighting or removing the Plaza. He said once

implementations are put into place, the time change could be revisited.

Alderwoman Swanson said the measure is not written in stone. She added one of the most important things is the perception of the downtown, and the City must ensure the security of the area first in order to attract the public. She noted the neighboring Iowa city of Davenport does not have problems with their 2:00 a.m. closing times and still generate revenue. She said if a business threatens to close in Rock Island and move, they would face the same closing time in Iowa. She added it would be irresponsible to assume that safety and perception goals have been reached at this time.

Alderman Clark said if the time is changed, it would not answer the problem of the perception of safety. He noted one owner said 32 percent of revenue comes from the extra hour of business, but there was still discussion of early closing times. He suggested focusing on safety and show the owners the support they need. He asked Alderwoman Swanson to think about what she had heard so Council can make the best decision for the City. Alderwoman Swanson asked Alderman Clark to explain why Iowa businesses that close at 2:00 a.m. do fine. Alderman Clark said other cities have issues, but the perception of Rock Island is a particular issue. He added that closing early does not make the downtown safe.

Alderman Parker replied there is a difference between a bar and nightclub, which helps identify the type of nightlife. He added an Iowa state law prevents nightclub owners to be open until 3:00 a.m. despite a desire to do so. He made the distinction between a nightclub with late entertainment and a neighborhood bar, noting they are different types of businesses, as nightclubs survive on late night patrons. He remembered his time in college when patrons knew of a police presence to deter trouble, and over the years due to budgets, such things were pulled back. He said Council needs to find a way to invest in the downtown, and begin acting on the proposed safety measures.

Alderman Poulos said he understood and agreed with Alderman Hurt, but the environment in the downtown provides a place for troubling activity to happen. He said after safety measures are enacted, that would be the time to reinstate the 3:00 a.m. closing. He said the earlier closing time does not ensure complete safety, but the likelihood of an issue would be lowered. He added he wants to give the Task Force a chance, and make sure there are enough officers to provide to the downtown. He suggested taking the funds that would pay for overtime and reinvest it into the infrastructure downtown to improve the business and safety situation. Mayor Thoms said he spoke with the City of Moline, and they allowed up to 15 bars to have a 3:00 a.m. liquor license, but only five or six had them.

Alderman Parker suggested an arrangement with neighboring police departments to provide additional security for the weekends, paid by the City. He added since the agenda's measure only called for considering the ordinance, he hoped Council would join him in working to keep as many businesses as possible in the downtown. He said investment would be necessary regardless of closing times. Mayor Thoms said all options have not yet been investigated but not investing would be a broad statement to make, including \$500,000 in infrastructure, a downtown manager, and the formation of the Task Force. He noted the funds may not be in security measures yet, but there is investment.

Alderman Poulos said hiring officers from other departments may cost more, and funding would need to be drawn away from other projects. He said Council needs to be considerate of all the citizens of Rock Island and not just those in the downtown area. Mayor Thoms said no one denies that businesses would be hurt by changing the closing time, and loiterers were the cause of problems. He added the City could send a message and reduce the opportunity for negative activities to happen as part of the whole plan. He agreed with Alderman Parker that the measure should be revisited in the future, as he feels bad for the businesses, but it is time to make a decision.

Alderman Geenen said the measure needs four votes to consider, and the issue is about creating a safe environment. He added the City needs to invest in the safety of the downtown. Mayor Thoms said perception is different from person to person, as some see fencing and wandering as safer, and some consider it dangerous. Alderwoman Swanson asked if a special meeting would be needed to make a decision on this before the sunset date. City Attorney Morrison said if there is not a special meeting, a decision would be made at the next Council meeting.

Mayor Thoms asked business owner Terry Tilka came up to speak. Mr. Tilka began by saying if liquor licenses go from 3:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m., the downtown would be empty and nightlife would go away based on his 42 years of experience. He said 99 percent of problems take place in the Plaza area or parking lots, not in the businesses. He added that he came to Rock Island because of the Plaza, and there is no District now. He noted there have been hundreds of jobs for young people eliminated due to the pandemic and the recent shooting. He said he called 911 the evening of the shooting, and to be blamed for it will not solve anything. He said previous Council members have destroyed the District and noted the downtown in the summer has the same problems as late night. He said if the measure passes, he will close his businesses. He added the revenue loss is more like an hour and a half due to last calls in the bars and nightclubs. He concluded by saying if the City wishes to micromanage downtown businesses, there will be none left.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 4-3-0 roll call vote. Aye: Poulos, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: Parker, Geenen, and Clark. Absent: None.

16. Report from the Mayor's office recommending amendments to Chapter 8, Division 4, Section 8-232 Vendor Permits and Division 6, Section 8-234, Prohibited Activities, as they pertain to the 3 a.m. alcoholic liquor license extended option.

MOTION:

Alderman Poulos moved to consider the ordinance; Alderwoman Swanson seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 4-3-0 roll call vote. Aye: Poulos, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: Parker, Geenen, and Clark. Absent: None.

17. Report from the Finance Department requesting a budget adjustment of \$230,580.00 related to the HUD-CDBV-CV (Covid-19) award received in August 2020 and a second adjustment in the amount of \$288,556.23 related to obligated PY 2020 CDBG-CV funding also awarded in 2020.

MOTION:

Alderman Clark moved to approve the total budget increase of \$519,136.23 to the CY 2021 CDBG-CV budget as recommended; Alderman Poulos seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

18. Report from the Finance Department requesting a budget adjustment, increasing the North 11th Street TIF Fund (Fund 203) expenditures for CY 2021 by \$25,775.00 to assist Friendship Manor with the demolition of property located at 1114-1116 21st Avenue.

MOTION:

Alderman Hurt moved to approve the budget adjustment as recommended; Alderman Spurgetis seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

19. Report from the Finance Department requesting a budget adjustment increasing the Columbia Park TIF Fund (Fund 205) expenditures for CY 2021 by \$20,000.00

MOTION:

Alderman Spurgetis moved to approve the budget adjustment as requested; Alderman Hurt seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

20. Report from the Finance Department requesting a budget adjustment, increasing the CDBG Fund (Fund 242) expenditures for CY 2021 by \$335,585.01.

MOTION:

Alderdwoman Swanson moved to approve the budget adjustment as requested; Alderman Hurt seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

21. Request from the Traffic and Engineering Committee regarding a request for a handicapped parking space in front of 1030 11th Avenue. (First Reading)

MOTION:

Alderman Clark moved to approve the request as recommended and consider the ordinance; Alderman Hurt seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

22. Report from the Traffic and Engineering Committee regarding a request for a handicapped parking space in front of 805 44th Street. (First Reading)

MOTION:

Alderman Poulos moved to approve the request as recommended and consider the ordinance; Alderman Spurgetis seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

23. Report from the Mayor's office regarding the reappointment of Mary Garrison to the Labor Day Parade Advisory Committee and the reappointments of Brenda Carmen, William Healy, Jon Keim and Paul Guse and the Appointment of Jason Watts to the Health Code Board of Appeals.

MOTION:

Alderman Geenen moved to approve the reappointments and appointment as recommended; Alderman Clark seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

24. Report from the City Clerk's Office regarding the St. Patrick's Day Parade, changing the previously approved parade date from March 13th to August 28th, 2021.

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to approve the request as recommended; Alderman Poulos seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

25. Other Business

Mayor Thoms invited Council to have a discussion on the downtown Plaza and stage areas. He asked what the Council would like to see in the area. Alderman Hurt said removing the Plaza would eliminate loitering. He added he would prefer parking on one side of the street with expanded sidewalks, which would go a long way to improve the safety of the District area. Alderman Poulos said the Plaza is part of the problem and has worn out its welcome. He noted there isn't an arts and entertainment district, but rather a bar district. He said taking the Plaza out would create more space for parking and reduce the amount of loitering.

Alderman Parker said the Task Force should lead the discussion. He added he does not feel comfortable saying what should be done, but preferred to hear what downtown stakeholders think. He said for years the City has made decisions based on what they thought would be best, whereas the stakeholders were not in agreement. He preferred for the discussion to not

originate with Council. Mayor Thoms said the purpose of the question was to have Council provide their vision to the Task Force. He added that whatever the Task Force decides, it would still need to come to Council for approval, as the money spent would also be public dollars.

Alderman Hurt said everyone on Council and on the Task Force has a vision, but Council should have a say towards improving the safety of the downtown. Mayor Thoms said the City spent money in 2015 on a plan for the downtown that brought in public and consulting input for what should be done with the downtown. He said Mr. Tweet has put together rough costs for the area, and if action is to be taken, it is better sooner than later to keep the process moving as swiftly as possible. Alderman Poulos said the discussion is a good thing and should empower the Task Force. Mayor Thoms noted that some stakeholders such as Matt Stern and Jon Keim are on the Task Force.

Alderman Spurgetis said he wanted to gather more information before coming to conclusions, but it is worth the effort to explore removing the Plaza and returning it to a street. He added it was too soon for him to come to any conclusions. Alderman Geenen said his vision is a vibrant and safe downtown, whether or not that includes a Plaza. Alderman Parker said Council should have the right to have input. He added that he agrees with Council as to what the downtown should be like, but the discussion is being approached in the opposite direction than he prefers. He said people in the downtown have the same thinking as Council, and the City should start with the community.

Alderman Poulos apologized and said he believed the Task Force wanted some direction from Council. Mayor Thoms said he did not want to rethink the 2015 plan, but Council could help the Task Force prioritize what is needed. Alderman Parker said the real intention was for the million-dollar contract with the Chamber of Commerce, and to have a downtown manager create a new place management organization to come up with a sustainable funding model such as a SSA. This would require approval from the downtown business owners. He said downtown Davenport created a task force and has a SSA, similar to other communities in the Quad Cities, but Rock Island does not. He said the way to get a SSA is through empowering and getting a buy-in from downtown property owners. He asked why businesses would agree to tax increases when the City does not solicit their input.

Mayor Thoms said he feels a SSA is 18 months to 2 years away and will not happen within a 12-month period. He said before a SSA is established, at least the Task Force can have their opinions heard. Alderman Parker said a two-year process for a SSA would include the public and stakeholders, but asked why there was a sense of urgency to do something now which may bring poor decisions. He agreed that the public should be involved in the process, and added he did not want Council to make a short-term decision based on the pressure of immediate results.

Alderwoman Swanson said the decision of closing times affects bar owners, but it is the job of Council to help them by initiating changes in lighting and safety. She noted the largest problem in the downtown is loitering by the Plaza stage. She said Council needs to move forward to make the downtown safer so a return to later closing times would be possible. Alderman Clark said he agreed with Alderwoman Swanson in that the City needs to implement safety measures as soon as possible. Alderman Spurgetis said changing the closing time is not intended to be a penalty to owners, but rather the intention was to ensure the safety of the influx of people outside of the City coming to the District.

Mayor Thoms said if the City would put funds toward design images for the area, it may be beneficial in discussions and critiques from the Task Force. Alderman Hurt said lighting changes need to be implemented as soon as possible, and asked if Council feels it is needed immediately, or it should wait until the Task Force was finished with a plan. Mayor Thoms asked for clarification as to what lighting Alderman Hurt was referring to; Hurt replied the street lights. Mr. Tweet said he sent figures out, and the City can obtain bids on lighting and bring it to Council

for approval. This would take the existing lighting and improving it to LED bulbs and would be programmable.

Alderman Parker said the street lights have not been requested as much as those on buildings and in alleys, per his conversations with business owners. He asked who would be responsible for programming lights as well as setting policy for future Councils. Mayor Thoms said there is a consensus on the lighting, specifically in alleys. Alderman Hurt asked Public Works Director Mike Bartels to speak on lighting possibilities. Mr. Bartels said he met with his electrical staff, including retrofitting what exists. He discussed what would be needed to complete lighting projects, and said it would be an upgrade to what the City currently has. He noted that Staff has not looked at security lighting in the alleys, as the City does not have right-of-way to go on private business property.

Alderman Parker said the lighting his constituents have asked for over recent years has not been addressed by Staff. He said the City should solicit what the community wants. Alderman Hurt said Council is in agreement that the City does need to get input from the public. He added Staff has looked at what would be needed, and Council is just being responsible and get as much information as possible.

26. Motion to Adjourn

MOTION:

Alderman Hurt moved to adjourn; Alderman Spurgetis seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Josh Adams, Deputy City Clerk