

CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
April 12, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

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

4/12/2021 - Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

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

ROLL CALL

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

Present: Mayor Mike Thoms and Alderman Mark Poulos.

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

Absent: Alderman Randy Hurt.

Staff: City Manager Randy Tweet, Interim City Clerk Linda Mohr, Parks and Recreation Director John Gripp, Public Works Director Mike Bartels, and other City staff.

PARKS AND REC DEPARTMENT - PRESENTATION OF THE FIRST TEE PROGRAM

Parks and Recreation Director John Gripp introduced a partnership with the First Tee of the Quad Cities program. He noted the presence of Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Todd Winter and Sarah Cross, Director of First Tee. Ms. Cross came to the front and thanked Council for their time. She discussed the program's mission and platform and passed out 4 different booklets that are given to participants for the Council to review. She stated these booklets really spelled out the program and what they stand for. She went on to give a bit of background of the First Tee program, stating that they first partnered with Highland Springs in 2014 and have served 1,000 participants since. She also detailed the 4 natural values that they teach - Judgment, Integrity, Honesty and Respect and described the 6 levels of the program, stating that each level is designed for different age groups and that each is 6 weeks in length. Cross explained that First Tee helped Highland put in a driving range and short course in 2018 to accommodate this program. The program donated about \$125,000 towards the \$175,000 total cost, with the City supplying the remaining \$50,000. Cross added that now they are trying to

build classrooms at Highland for indoor programming, meeting and event space, and office space for First Tee staff and instructors. She advised that they are modeling this project after their partnership with Davenport.

Todd Winter then spoke about the clubhouse at Highland Springs. He stated that the current clubhouse is original to the course and was built in 1968 and has outlived its useful life. He added that this golf course is consistently rated as one of the top public courses in the area and the new clubhouse would be a brighter welcoming focal point and would be able to generate revenue from larger events and increased food and beverage sales, along with allowing for year round events and programming. He went on to discuss the project scope, including the proposed 3000 square foot floor plan.

John Gripp then spoke about the budget and timeline, stating that the project has an estimated \$1.3M budget with payments spread out over 10 years at about 1.5%. Breaking the project down to the first four years, Gripp stated they would need to raise about \$600,000, but added that private donations as of April 1, 2021 totaled over \$56,000 and they have received a pledged commitment from First Tee for \$200,000. He went on to say that the fundraising goal from 2021 to 2024 is an additional \$350,000, and they have talked to several foundations already and the project has been very well received. He expects multi-year donations with those as well. He also added that in the second phase, the RIFAC bond will expire, freeing up an additional \$215,000 each year that will be shifted towards this project. Gripp added that the project will not increase the Parks and Recreation budget, and will actually see a reduction of about \$65,000 annually beginning in 2024. Gripp added that every year going forward they will continue to work with the Parks foundations to raise monies to cover additional expenses. Gripp ended by summarizing the project timeline for the next 15 months, and stated that they hope to break ground around late October, early November 2021 and to have the doors open in June 2022.

Alderwoman Swanson asked what the collateral would be for the loan and Gripp advised that they would be making a large down payment, and with the additional donations, they would be able to work something out with the bank for the remainder.

Alderman Geenen stated that Gripp has more than proven himself to be very capable and appreciates that he brought forward a great and creative project. Mayor Thoms echoed those sentiments and also commended First Tee.

Alderman Clark asked how he could get his grandson involved and Ms. Cross and Gripp both advised him to contact them. He also echoed the previous comments.

Mayor Thoms asked Ms. Cross how many kids are served by First Tee across the board, not just in Rock Island. She advised even with the program being shut down for a good portion of the year in 2020, they still served 420 traditional students through the program, and that number did not include the free and scholarship students. Ms. Cross added that she has lived in Rock Island all her life and she thinks what Rock Island is doing in partnering with the YMCA and YWCA is truly inspiring, and hopes others will follow suit and continue to make Rock Island a great place to live.

Mayor Thoms thanked everyone for their commitment to this project.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT - PRESENTATION, 2021 GOAL TO IMPROVE CITY IMAGE

Mike Bartels, Public Works Director, approached the podium and thanked the Council for allowing him to present the Public Works goals on improving the City's image. He started with the 2021 priorities and the steps that are being implemented this year. He stated that because of budget constraints in 2020 with the pandemic, some things like mulching and landscaping in the downtown area were overshadowed, but are a priority in 2021. He said the department supplied the materials, but approached several contractors to do the actual work and that they would be finishing up in the next few days. Bartels added that the department has also been working on deep cleaning the downtown area, including blowing off sidewalks, emptying trash more often and mulching and weeding the planters and beds in addition to what they have already been doing. He stated that street sweeping on 1st and 2nd shift started and all main streets have been swept and will continue to be swept bi-monthly. All residential streets have been swept once. Pavement striping of the crosswalks, street symbols and long line striping will be completed in July, as soon as the contract is awarded. This was put on hold in 2020 because of the pandemic.

Alderman Parker asked if Bartels or someone from his department has been in communication with Jack Cullen, the new downtown manager, and Bartels advised he had not. Parker asked that Bartels does get in touch with him so that Mr. Cullen can pass along to building and business owners what we have been doing. Bartels assured Parker he would do that.

Alderman Spurgetis asked about sweeping the residential streets, specifically if it was once a year or once a month. Bartels advised that it would be once a year for residential streets for sure, but he believed that the department could get to them two times a year.

Bartels continued and outlined plans for trash pickup, clearing, graffiti removal and general maintenance for the downtown area. He mentioned the department continues to do the LED upgrades and regular maintenance on the vintage lights, and plan to increase the number of holiday decorations this year. Also, work has started on miscellaneous improvements such as fixing gates and fences, improving the levee and getting the vines removed from the outside of City Hall. Bartels continued by showing pictures of the mulching by the contractors, and stated they were working on 4th and 5th Avenues between 14th and 24th Streets. He added the contractors are also doing tree trimming and weed control while they are mulching in that area, and should be done in the next few days.

Bartels said they added several areas to their weed spraying program. Alderman Spurgetis asked about the program and Bartels stated if there was an area in need to let him know, as it would be relatively easy to add locations to the contract. Alderman Geenen asked that Mr. Bartels take a look at the area by Circa '21 and the QC Pancake House to see if could be added to the contract, as he has had some complaints about weeds coming up through sidewalks in that area.

Mr. Bartels discussed additional cleaning efforts, including debris cleanup, street sweeping the elevated medians and brick streets, graffiti removal, litter pickup, as well as illegal dumping throughout the City. He advised that Public Works is working with Andy Parer on storm water abatement, and noted the historic lighting upgrades that have been completed at Hauberg Civic Center and in front of City Hall. He also noted the holiday lighting that was added last year in the downtown entrance way off the Centennial Expressway. Bartels talked about changing the lights throughout the City to LED and gave examples of two different ways employees or residents could report streetlight outages or how to request a new street light.

Bartels mentioned the gate replacement under the Centennial Bridge and the levee improvements that have already been made and are continuing. Lastly, he noted other improvements such as repairs and upgrades to lighting at the foot of the bridge, which provides the ability to change the color to match a specific event if desired.

Mayor Thoms commended Mr. Bartels and his department for a job well done. He mentioned they also fixed the clock at 18th Avenue and 17th/20th Streets. He then asked about powerwashing the planters and stage downtown and Bartels advised that is part of the cleanup plan.

Alderman Geenen said he has noticed and likes the new momentum in Rock Island with these improvements.

Mr. Bartels thanked Mayor Thoms and Alderman Geenen for their comments, and mentioned a few more improvements that his department has been working on before concluding.

Alderman Clark thanked Bartels for responding when he has called in complaints and for doing such a great job.

Alderman Parker commented about the capacity issue that the City has on a number of fronts, mainly having necessary staff to get some things done. He asked if these were the result of an increased workforce. Bartels responded they have been able to hire some positions that had been previously been frozen. Alderman Parker asked why these positions were not hired before and City Manager Randy Tweet stated the City had a hiring freeze last year with budget issues due to the pandemic, and is now in the process of filling some positions.

Mayor Thoms mentioned that Norm Moline and several others have been walking the bike paths and cleaning up as they are out and about. He said they are also contacting companies about cleaning up their properties around the bike paths.

Alderman Poulos stated that he will be sending some information to the City Manager and Mr. Bartels, along with Alderman Parker, about a few areas in the downtown area that he feels need addressing.

With no other comments from the Council, the Study Session was adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

Josh Adams, Deputy City Clerk