

CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL MEETING

City Hall

1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island IL

City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor

5/24/2021 - Minutes

1. 6:45 p.m. Oath of Office - Alderman Dylan Parker

OATH OF OFFICE - Interim City Clerk Josh Adams administered the Oath of Office to 5th Ward Alderman Dylan Parker.

2. Call to Order

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 6:47 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

3. 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.

4. Roll Call

Mayor Thoms asked Interim City Clerk Adams to call the roll.

Present: Alderman Moses Robinson, Alderman Randy Hurt, Alderwoman Judith Gilbert, Alderwoman Jenni Swanson, Alderman Dylan Parker, Alderman Mark Poulos, and Alderman Dave Geenen.

Absent: None.

Staff: City Manager Randy Tweet, Interim City Clerk Josh Adams, and other City staff.

5. Pledge of Allegiance

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

6. Moment of Silence

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

7. Public Comment

Mayor Thoms asked if anyone in the public wished to speak.

Rock Island resident Tim McGuire came to the front and discussed his concerns regarding Police and foot pursuits. He noted the response from the public and Mayor Thoms to Alderman Parker's recent comments, and said Parker deserves to speak his mind. He said Alderman Parker is the only Council member to have responded to all emails sent over a three-year period. He added Alderman Parker has previously shown his support of the Police Department in the course of their discussions. He provided additional comments on the City's utility policy during the pandemic, the state of the 20th Street hill road, and the potential for the privatization of the City's water services.

Rock Island resident Bridget Ehrmann came to the front and expressed support of Alderman Parker's comments regarding Police and foot pursuits. She said leaders should make decisions based on data and not opinion, and noted Alderman Parker was calling for that with his comments. She was disappointed in the Council and the Police Department's response. She asked that all involved listen to and work with each other to find a resolution.

Rock Island resident Kelly Kruse came to the front and expressed disappointment in the events surrounding the May 10, 2021 Council meeting. She said many people generally ask themselves if an event like that which spurred Alderman Parker's comments could be prevented. She noted the presence of local police officers at the meeting and said it was not a good look for the City and seemed more of a tantrum.

Rock Island resident Tamara Felden came to the front and expressed support of Alderman Parker in his efforts to discuss safety policies with the Police Department. She noted what she deemed an adversarial position taken by officers present at the previous City Council meeting. She said as a taxpayer and resident, she does have the right to ask questions and expect accountability for local government and departments. She called for unity and said this could be an opportunity for learning.

Rock Island resident Annika O'Melia came to the front and said she supported the idea that the City is healthier when dissent and dialogue are in the public space. She noted the tone, statements, and demonstrations at the previous Council meeting illustrated a divide within the community regarding police reform. She added her desire to see a process established that would gather feedback from the public for the distribution of the American Relief Plan funds received by the City. She suggested modalities of collaboration with the public and City to bring the community together.

Rock Island resident Anthony Gay came to the front and praised Alderman Parker for having the courage to speak up. He discussed his views on leadership and said the City's leadership lacks gravity. He discussed an incident in May of 2020 involving himself and a Rock Island police officer. He noted a separate incident in October of 2020 involving Akbar Eaddy. He said there is no accountability in the City, noting a co-dependent relationship amongst the Rock Island County Integrity Task Force, the Rock Island County Prosecutor, and the Rock Island Police Department. He called for an investigation by an independent commission to be submitted to the Department of Justice regarding the deaths of Mr. Eaddy and DeShawn Tatum. He requested Council consider a commission to investigate the Rock Island Police Department's activities

over the past 24 months.

Mayor Thoms called Brook Hicks to speak, but no one responded. It appeared that the resident had left.

Rock Island resident Thurgood Brooks came to the front and addressed recent discussions regarding police reform policies. He said City leadership missed the point of Alderman Parker's comments and the substance of the communication. He noted there is a mistrust between the community and the Police Department, and with each serious incident, that mistrust deepens. He said the community as a whole must do better. He recalled a City policy stating that off-duty officers cannot wear their uniforms, but Chief VenHuizen had given them permission. He questioned why the City Manager would give Chief VenHuizen permission to do so. He said these actions encouraged bullying behavior from the Police Department. He added the City must have a Manager who will lead even in times of confrontation, as that is when leaders are needed most. He called for Council and City leadership to engage in the process of discussion for reform on policing policies. He concluded that he would send emails with a draft of the previously proposed Police and Community Relations commission to Council members, Mayor Thoms, and Mr. Tweet.

8. Minutes from the May 10, 2021 meeting.

MOTION:

Alderman Hurt moved to approve the minutes as printed; Alderman Robinson seconded.

VOTE:

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

9. Update Rock Island by Mayor Thoms

Whitewater Junction- Whitewater Junction Aquatic Center is scheduled to open for the summer season on May 29th. New renovations are being prepared for the opening including landscaping and cabanas. The hours are Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For more information, please call 309-732-7946.

Starlight Revue Free Concerts- The 65th annual Rock Island Parks & Recreation Concert Series will begin on Tuesday, May 25, 2021 and will run through Tuesday, July 13, 2021. A total of eight free concerts will be presented with one being held every Tuesday night at Lincoln Park. Bring your lawn chair and enjoy the sounds of Troy Rangel & Friends. Food and desserts will be available for purchase from Hy-Vee Grill starting at 5:00 p.m., and popcorn and drinks will be serviced by the Parks Department. The concert will be held from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Wild Side Walks- Black Hawk State Historic Site is having hikes every Wednesday in May and June at 10:00 am and 11:15 am. Join a naturalist for a guided natural history hike and learn about common plants native to the parks forests and how Native Americans used these plants in their daily lives. For more information, please visit www.blackhawkpark.org.

Holiday Refuse and Recycling Schedule- Refuse, recycling, and yard waste collection will be one day late all week during the week of the Memorial Day holiday. The City of Rock Island offices will be closed on Memorial Day, Monday May 31st.

10. Proclamation declaring the month of June, 2021 as Pride Month in the City of Rock Island.

Interim City Clerk Adams read the proclamation. Mayor Thoms read his declaration.

11. A Special Ordinance amending section three of the local Liquor Ordinance, specifically as it relates to issuing licenses to applicants who have previously been convicted of a felony. (Second Reading)

MOTION:

Alderman Robinson moved to pass the ordinance; Alderman Parker seconded.

VOTE:

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

12. Claims

- a. Report from the Public Works Department regarding payment in the amount of \$603,070.00 to Johnson Controls Inc. of Moline, IL for services provided from March 1, 2021 through May 30, 2021.

MOTION:

Alderwoman Swanson moved to allow the claims; Alderman Geenen seconded.

VOTE:

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

13. Claims for the week of May 7 through May 13, 2021 in the amount of \$1,649,475.28.

MOTION:

Alderman Geenen moved to allow the claims and payroll; Alderman Robinson seconded.

VOTE:

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

14. Report from the Community and Economic Development Department regarding an Ordinance rezoning from R-4 (multi-unit residential) to PUD (Planned Unit Development) the property located approximately at 2001 7th Avenue (Parcel 095289) - First Reading.

MOTION:

Alderman Poulos moved to consider the Ordinance; Alderman Parker seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Robinson, Hurt, Gilbert, Swanson, Parker, Poulos,

and Geenen. Nay: None. Absent: None.

15. Report from the Public Works Department regarding the Local Agency Agreement and Resolution from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) for the patching and resurfacing of Andalusia Road from IL-92 to US Route 67.

MOTION:

Alderman Hurt moved to approve the Local Agency Agreement and Resolution and authorize the Mayor to execute the documents; Alderwoman Gilbert seconded.

VOTE:

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

16. Report from the Human Resources Department regarding the approval of a four-year labor agreement with AFSCME B.

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to approve the proposed four-year labor agreement between the City and the AFSCME B for the period January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2023; Alderman Robinson seconded.

VOTE:

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

17. Report from the Finance Department regarding modifications to the City's Investment Policy.

MOTION:

Alderwoman Gilbert moved to approve the recommended modifications to the investment policy to include changes related to state statutes and internal compliance; Alderman Geenen seconded.

VOTE:

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

18. Report from the Traffic and Engineering Committee regarding a request from Georgina Hicks to install a two-way stop sign on 4th Street at the intersection of 11th Avenue.

MOTION:

Alderman Poulos moved to allow the request; Alderman Robinson seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Robinson, Hurt, Gilbert, Swanson, Parker, Poulos,

and Geenen. Nay: None. Absent: None.

19. Report from the Traffic and Engineering Committee regarding a request from Tom Sheil to install a four-way stop on 27th Street at the intersection of 21st Avenue.

MOTION:

Alderwoman Swanson moved to allow the request; Alderman Hurt seconded.

VOTE:

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

20. Report from the Mayor's office regarding the appointment of Alderman Moses Robinson, Jr. to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center Board, and appointments of Alderwoman Judith Gilbert and Venessa Taylor as well as the reappointments of Bill Anderson and John McEvoy to the Park Board.

MOTION:

Alderman Geenen moved to approve the appointments and reappointments as recommended; Alderwoman Swanson seconded.

VOTE:

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

21. Report from the City Clerk's office regarding a request from Greater Antioch Baptist Church, 929 - 14th Street, for sound amplification and to close off 10th Avenue between 14th Street and 14th 1/2 Street on Sunday, June 13th and Sunday, June 27th, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for outdoor church services on those days.

MOTION:

Alderman Robinson moved to approve the street closing and sound amplification requests as recommended; Alderwoman Gilbert seconded.

VOTE:

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

22. Other Business

Mayor Thoms asked if there were additional topics to cover.

Alderman Robinson asked what the progress had been with regards to the discussed Police and Community Relations Commission. Mr. Tweet said work had been submitted to the originating group, and he assumed their aforementioned reply through Thurgood Brooks would be the next step.

Alderwoman Gilbert said she was surprised to learn of the existence of the Finance Committee. She noted Council should be involved in the beginning of the budget process through this committee as opposed to near the end. She suggested Council goals should drive the budget for the year. She added the City has been living beyond its means for years, and suggested a zero-based budgeting process based on past data. She encouraged participatory budgeting with public input.

Alderman Geenen agreed with Alderwoman Gilbert and recalled previous goal-setting meetings taking place in June. Mr. Tweet confirmed that was correct, but the session dates for budgeting were altered due to the pandemic. He added Council could have goal-setting meetings when they preferred. Alderwoman Swanson said partial reasons for keeping the goal-setting date in fall was to allow new Council members to acclimate and allow goals to more align with the budget.

Mayor Thoms countered statements regarding the City's financial status, saying it is coming around, reserves have been maintained, and the City is making the necessary payments. Alderman Robinson said if the City is unable to complete planned capital improvement projects, it is not financially stable. Mayor Thoms replied most cities are unable to complete all capital projects due to cost. Alderman Hurt said Rock Island is not the only city in the current status. Alderman Geenen said that should not be an excuse to start thinking creatively about fixing the problems. Mayor Thoms added the City's property tax rate is the highest of the Illinois Quad Cities. Alderman Geenen said Council does not have an accurate picture of the City's debt.

Alderwoman Gilbert said the City needs to do better communicating with residents regarding pension liabilities. Mayor Thoms replied the City has been up front, but it may not be understood, which is the City's responsibility. He noted that Police and Fire Pension funds will increase each year through 2041. Alderman Poulos said the City needs to improve communication regarding obligations, and he has had conversations with his constituents regarding funds. Mayor Thoms said the City is in a fair amount of debt, but is stable and has communicated this to residents.

Alderman Parker said the City does need to be serious regarding long-term implications of pension increases. He added the City should figure a way to address the pension ramp, and currently there is not enough done to communicate upcoming pension issues to residents. Alderman Poulos said some municipalities are installing various plans intended to fund the pensions. Alderwoman Gilbert noted there are twice as many individuals drawing pensions as contributions from active members, which she said was not sustainable.

Alderman Hurt asked Alderman Parker how the City was not being truthful with constituents regarding pension increases. Alderman Parker said the City was not doing enough, but not lying. Alderman Hurt said before engaging public opinion regarding American Recovery Plan (ARP) funds, information regarding guidelines should be communicated to residents. Alderman Parker said the consensus seemed to be communication with residents should improve regarding various topics, and called for a plan to help educate the public. Mr. Tweet said the City still posts information through press releases into various media outlets, but there is no set plan for communication currently adopted by Council. Mayor Thoms said a communication plan is needed, and hoped to take suggestions from Council as to what should be in it.

Alderman Hurt said he observed rescue training with other elected officials on the Interstate 74 bridge, and noted it was a wonderful demonstration. He thanked Chief Yerkey for the invite.

23. Executive Session:

Alderman Geenen moved to amend the Executive Session for exception 5ILCS 120/2 (c)(1) The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, of specific employees of a

public body; Alderwoman Swanson seconded.

Alderman Parker suggested using the exception listed on the agenda and made a motion.

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to go into Executive Session for the exceptions cited; Alderwoman Swanson seconded.

A discussion of which motion to enter Executive Session took place. Mr. Tweet confirmed both Executive Sessions could take place at the same time as both exceptions were cited.

VOTE:

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

24. Motion to Adjourn

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to adjourn; Alderwoman Gilbert seconded.

VOTE:

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

The meeting concluded at 9:22 p.m.

Josh Adams, Interim City Clerk