



**CITY OF RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN
COMMON COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS**

January 12, 2021

Mayor Dan Toland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in a virtual meeting format due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The City Council Chambers was open for public to attend.

City Council Members Present: Todd Bjerstedt, Sean Downing, Christopher Gagne, Scott Morrissette, Diane Odeen, Ben Plunkett, Hal Watson

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: City Administrator Scot Simpson; IT Specialist Jon Smits; Assistant City Administrator Jason Stroud; City Attorney Chris Gierhart; others

Others Present: Allison Sauter, John Worsing

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

December 8, 2020, Minutes

MS Watson/Downing move to approve minutes. The roll call vote passed unanimously 7-0 with all voting in favor.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Bills: \$432,629.71

MS Plunkett/Watson move to approve bills subject to the Comptroller. The roll call vote passed unanimously 7-0 with all voting in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT, PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

Allison Sauter, Big Brothers, Big Sisters – she appreciated the Council and community as a whole and the support. The Mayor asked if the Council had questions.

Aldersperson Odeen asked how many kids are involved in Big Brothers, Big Sisters in River Falls. Sauter didn't know the exact number. She spoke about the partnership with the university which has 12 enrolled there. There are also more in community-based partnerships. If people wanted to get involved, they can visit the website bbbsnw.org.

Aldersperson Morrissette asked how they were handling the Covid situation. Sauter said the agency pivoted following guidance about not meeting in person. They developed virtual options to meet and adapted to develop great activities. Sauter provided further details. The Mayor thanked Sauter.

Ben Fochs, 2529 Powell Avenue – talked about the upcoming workshop regarding dam decommissioning. He mentioned the importance of the future look of site. He asked about the process of assessments for businesses. Fochs spoke about empty retail properties. He talked about the upcoming brewpub ordinance and asked about food truck regulations.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Resolution No. 6538 - Proclaiming World Migratory Bird Day

Resolution Approving EMS Agreement with Town of Martell →→*Pulled by Watson*

MS Odeen/Morrisette move to approve remainder of Consent Agenda. The roll call vote passed 7-0 with all voting in favor.

Resolution No. 6539 - Approving EMS Agreement with Town of Martell

Aldersperson Watson doesn't understand rate difference. He would like discussion about why we are charging an additional rate to Martell. City Administrator Simpson confirmed it is a different rate and explained it was due to some contract costs that the City didn't have with the other townships. Watson preferred all be charged the same rate. He doesn't feel comfortable with where we are at right now giving staff authority to execute contract. He would like to see staff finalize agreement. Watson asked for input from others.

Simpson explained that the City has been asked a favor by a neighbor, and we are trying to facilitate it. This is not a gain or significant benefit to the City. This is a request that seemed reasonable. We have provided some service to Martell in the past. Staff has made a call to Ellsworth to see if there were objections, and there was not. Simpson said this is a policy question for the Council. The agreement won't look any different than this. The template is the same as used with other towns. He presumed that Council would be interested in deciding and having staff carry it out.

Aldersperson Downing asked at what point does this become a potential burden contracting out. Simpson responded saying if no other towns were involved, it might be a burden. Simpson provided other details. Downing asked about the \$2 per capita fee for oversight and asked for an explanation.

Assistant City Administrator Stroud said it seemed to be a reasonable amount for the staff work that would go into this for the life of the contract. Of the \$15, \$13 goes to Allina. Allina has set the rates and is saying it will cost this to provide the service. In terms of the contract, he reminded Council that it is the template that they previously approved for the other townships. It is the legally reviewed template that the attorney has already approved.

Aldersperson Gagne asked about the average populations of the towns we are servicing. Stroud said the Martell population is less than other towns. He talked further about the fee in relation to the population. Gagne asked about Martell's cost with Ellsworth. Stroud said it is \$31 per capita. Gagne asked about possible scenarios of other communities going out of business with their EMS services and if staff was aware of any possibilities. Simpson is unclear about future of the Ellsworth Area Ambulance Service. He talked further.

Gagne asked about Allina's thoughts on the contract. Simpson doesn't believe it will impact the service level for River Falls. Stroud has specifically discussed this with Allina, and they don't have a concern. They think it may be about two calls per month. Stroud shared that a mutual aid request to Martell was recently made and the response time was under 12:30 minutes. If you chose to include Martell, it doesn't change what Allina owes River Falls in terms of performance expectations and service requirements. There was further discussion about response time and the possibility of a truck being dispatched for an extended time to Martell. Gagne asked why Martell wants to contract with the City.

John Worsing, Supervisor with the Township of Martell, explained that costs rise, the income continues to go down. He spoke about sitting on the Ellsworth Ambulance Committee and feels there is reluctance to address those issues. Worsing said the status of the Allina system is fantastic, and he is impressed with the medical direction. He feels it would be a significant attribute for township to utilize the EMS service.

Aldersperson Odeen clarified that we are acting as administrators of contract. From what Stroud said, an extra \$2 per capita won't cover staff expenses. She doesn't see this as prohibitive. She thinks it would be a great benefit for them, and Allina has no qualms. Odeen is comfortable with giving staff the authority to do this.

Aldersperson Morrissette asked about Martell's current level of service with Ellsworth. Worsing said it is an ALS service. Morrissette said this is not the River Falls EMS Service – it is Allina. He talked about possible scenarios and Allina has to fill the gap. We have to trust Allina; they think they can do it. Regarding the contract, if it was larger amount, he may want an extra step. Morrissette compared it to the City's purchasing policy and the amount the City Administrator can approve. He noted Allina is already granting mutual aid to Martell. Morrissette has no concerns moving forward with contract.

Gagne agree with both Watson and Morrissette. He has full confidence in Stroud and Simpson. He would like this to come back to Council as a final approve. He asked about a timeline for Martell.

Worsing explained the actions needed to implement a contract including meetings and discussions with the Pierce County Sheriff Department. The goal would be to have the contract approved with a start date as soon as we get a date from dispatch. There was further discussion about the timeline and contract.

Watson thanked Worsing for being present. He asked if Martell was having a public meeting regarding the ems service. Worsing said it is on the agenda tonight and has been for the last three months.

MS Watson/Gagne move to approve the resolution. MS Watson/Gagne Made a motion to amend the resolution to remove the words “and execute” from the NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED portion of the resolution and also strike the last BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED clause. He would like to have this brought back to the Council. The Mayor asked for discussion.

Aldersperson Odeen asked for an explanation of why it would need to come back to the Council. Gagne felt the Council was accountable to the taxpayers, and we are administrators of the plan. Odeen said the obligations are primarily Allina's. Gagne wanted it to come back to the Council to have a final say. There was further discussion. Odeen will be a no vote.

Morrissette said this contract was used with the other towns. He doesn't see that we will have a lot of back and forth with the contract. He is a no on the amendment. He appreciates the concern but feels Council can hand it to staff and move on.

Aldersperson Downing appreciated the amendment. It gives Council a chance to see what went on in negotiations. He will be voting in favor.

With no other comments, the Mayor asked for a vote on the amendment. The roll call vote passed 4-3 with Downing, Gagne, Plunkett, and Watson voting in favor and Bjerstedt, Morrissette and Odeen voting against.

The Mayor asked for a vote on the original motion. The roll call vote passed 7-0 with all voting in favor. Worsing thanked staff and Council for their support.

REPORTS:

Administrator's Report

Simpson talked about staff working over the holidays, a listening session with non-profits, moving toward Phase 1 of the “Crushing Covid” plan and walk-in hours for City Hall.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Mayor asked for approval of the following appointments:

Bid Board

Reappointment of Joleen Larson through December 2023

Board of Appeals

Reappointment of Eric Amundsen through October 2024

Reappointment of Andrew Brown through February 2024

Historic Preservation Commission

Reappointment of Pam Friede through January 2024

Park and Recreation Advisory Board

New appointment of Matt Janquart through May 2024 (replacing Susan Reese)

Police and Fire Commission

Reappointment of Gary Donath through April 2026

MS Morrissette/Watson move to approve Mayor's Appointments. The roll call vote passed 7-0 with all voting in favor.

Big Brothers, Big Sisters Proclamation

The Mayor read the proclamation.

At 7:36 p.m., MS Bjerstedt/Downing move to adjourn. The roll call vote passed 7-0 with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi McKahan, Deputy Clerk