



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

March 9, 2021

Mayor Dan Toland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in a virtual 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; Community Development Director Amy Peterson; Civil Engineer Zach Regnier; others

Others Present: Thomas Pederson, Shelly Smith

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

February 23, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes

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

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Bills: \$1,361,939.17

MS Gagne/Downing 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:

There were no public comments.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Storm Water Permit - 2020 Annual Report - Resolution No. 6551 Authorizing Content of 2020 Annual Report to Discharge Water

Civil Engineer Zach Regnier gave a presentation on MS4 permit for 2020. The MS4 is the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System which the City has to report on annually to demonstrate compliance. The purpose is to protect water quality by reducing pollution in the City's stormwater runoff.

2020 was a slow year due to Covid. All school activities were cancelled. Staff gave a presentation at the APWA Snow Conference with the focus on winter maintenance. Regnier talked about the reduction of salt usage. There were no illicit discharge reports in 2020.

Regnier provided updates. He talked about management program documents for the six compliance areas which are a new requirement. He also talked about the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) which refers to phosphorus pollution in Lake St. Croix. The City currently doesn't meet the TMDL but are complying and are in a phased strategy to meet it. The City has to submit its plan by October 31. He spoke further saying the City is in compliance through 2024 but staff is trying to do more.

Upon the completion of the presentation, the Mayor moved into a Public Hearing at 6:38 p.m. There were no public comments. The Mayor closed the Public Hearing at 6:39 p.m. and asked for a motion on the resolution. MS Morrissette/Downing move to approve the resolution.

Alderson Morrissette asked Regnier to speak about the TMDL and farm runoff that goes into the Kinni. Regnier didn't have the exact numbers from the studies that demonstrate where the contributing numbers come from. He said the runoff overwhelmingly comes from non-urban sources. Urban sources are a smaller contributor to phosphorus.

Morrissette talked about the public adopting the City's ponds. He thanked Regnier for his hard work.

Alderson Downing asked about St. Croix pond and the associated grant. He asked City Administrator Simpson to provide a history. Simpson talked about the pond. A grant was applied for and received. The pond rehabilitation was a larger project than what was funded so the City returned the grant to the DNR. A basic rehabilitation of the pond will be done in conjunction with the North Interceptor project. Downing would like to see a timeline in relation to the pond.

Downing asked if the City had a biosolids facility, would there be an overlap regarding phosphorus. Simpson said there would be little or no overlap. Simpson would view a biosolids facility as neutral regarding a MS4 permit. Simpson noted the City will be doing work in the pond as soon as fall 2021.

Alderson Plunkett asked if the rain barrel and pond programs were to help with water that is coming off of roofs. He asked about the influx of storm water coming off of roofs versus roads and parking lots.

Regnier said Plunkett was correct; the City wants to catch first flush of water which is the dirtiest. For water numbers of roofs versus roads, he doesn't have a number. Regnier spoke further providing a detailed explanation.

With no other questions, the Mayor asked for a vote. The roll call vote passed unanimously 7-0 with all voting in favor.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Resolution No. 6552 - Approving Lease between the City of River Falls and Jake Schweizer (Whitetail Corporate Park and Sterling Ponds Corporate Park) →→*pulled by Downing*

Downing asked about the handling of land contracts if multiple parties were interested. The Mayor said it is up to the City Administrator to decide as we trust him to handle these. Morrissette agreed with the Mayor. He said the City has several land leases. He spoke further saying if the dollar amount was larger, he thinks the administrator would bring them to Council, and the Council would want to review them. Morrissette does not want to set a dollar amount for Council to review. He is comfortable where things are presently at.

Alderson Watson talked about the staff time to put together a BID package, shop it, and review it and how quickly that adds up. With this contract, Schweizer is coming to us and doing us a favor by mowing the hay. He suggested leaving it to Simpson to find the balance.

Alderson Odeen agreed with Morrissette and Watson. Leaving the decision with the City Administrator is a good one. It is a short-term agreement on lots that we hope get built on one day. She is entirely comfortable letting the administration figure out what terms are best for the City.

Alderson Plunkett understands Downing's concern. He had questions about what City policies are in place about herbicide use on the land and the impact of runoff.

Simpson believes the City has different lease forms one with language about chemicals and hazardous waste. On this property, he believes we are relying on the farmer's best practices. He provided more information saying

staff had worked on guidelines for City property. Simpson spoke further and asked Morrissette if he remembered anything. Morrissette remembered a conversation but that is all he recalled.

Watson said about two years ago he talked with Mr. Stifter about the application of herbicides and pesticides on grassy areas maintained by the City. Stifter got back to him with current City practices. Watson thinks it is not an official policy. He suggested that maybe the City Forester could look at this type of agricultural practice.

Downing asked at what point does it come back to the Council. In the past, Simpson said he wouldn't have brought this contract to the Council. He brought it for transparency purposes; dollar-wise, we are a long way away for this contract. He understands that the Council has more interest in these types of things. Simpson said the administrative costs to do these things are you spend 10 cents to make a nickel. He provided more details.

MS Downing/Morrissette move to approve the resolution. The Mayor asked for questions.

Alderson Gagne noted part of a sentence was missing in the memo on page 68. Simpson said the missing section refers to the City saving \$700 due to not having to mow the lot.

Plunkett felt that the Council should look at the City's agricultural policies. **With no other questions, the Mayor asked for a vote on the resolution. The roll call vote passed unanimously 7-0 with all voting in favor.**

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution No. 6553 - Approving a Low Interest Loan to Our Neighbor's Place, Inc.

Community Development Director Amy Peterson provided a presentation on the loan. Our Neighbor's Place, Inc. (ONP) focuses on four core programs: a day center, clothing closet, transitional housing, and the backpack program. Peterson talked about the number of housing focused services it provides.

ONP staff approached City staff two years ago looking for future options. Last year, they asked about a low interest loan to purchase their current building. Peterson said in reviewing their financials and background, staff has found a healthy organization and a strong board of directors. She provided the loan details which are a \$300,000 loan at two percent interest for 20 years with ONP putting an \$80,000 down payment on the purchase, and the City securing a first lien on the property.

Peterson said staff is proposing that the loan be funded by monies reserved for housing. The fund has a substantial balance and staff feels this is a prudent use of the funds. She noted the City had provided a loan to ONP in 2013 which was paid back early and in full. Peterson said ONP staff were available for questions.

The Mayor asked for a motion. MS Morrissette/Gagne move to approve the resolution. The Mayor asked for questions.

Downing asked about ONP's history of paying back loans. Simpson provided a brief history on ONP and the prior loan saying the payments were timely and paid in full in advance.

Morrissette added to Simpson's comments saying ONP asked for a shorter loan. They wanted a short-term note to provide motivation to their board and investors to retire the loan quickly. They paid us off early. Morrissette knows several board members personally. They are a great organization. He appreciates what they do in the community. He is in favor of this and hopes the loan can be granted.

Plunkett thanked Peterson and staff on the work done on the loan and ONP for their work in the community. He asked what obligations do local financial institutions have under the 1977 Community Reinvestment Act and how will the loan impact City finances?

Simpson said the Community Reinvestment Act has benchmarks for banks, so they have some responsibility as a member of the national banking system to meet those in loaning out for community reinvestment. He can't speak to how this loan would fit for each bank. Simpson talked about the City's fund for housing. There isn't a policy for best use. He thinks this loan is in the wheelhouse of what would likely be approved by Council for use of these funds. Simpson spoke further about the policy question. If the loan wasn't repaid, the City would lose the funds that could be used for something else. Simpson said a policy would be brought before Council at a later date. He talked about other projects that the Council has approved using the housing fund.

Aldersperson Odeen thanked Simpson for providing background. She noted the funds the City has earmarked for housing. The City has a responsibility to help with affordable housing within the City far and above any obligation of banks. We have the money to do this. Some of the monies came from TID funds specifically earmarked for affordable housing. She feels this is an excellent use of the money. We should put it into the community. Odeen is okay without having a firm policy. She thinks that sometimes we let details get in the way.

Aldersperson Bjerstedt asked the ONP representatives their observation of the increase in contacts from 989 to 4,870 in a five-year period. He asked what is going on.

Thomas Pederson, from Our Neighbor's Place, felt ONP has been increasing partnerships across the City with other non-profits and the awareness of the services, referrals, and connections provide has increased. He thinks people know the staff can help them which contributes in the increase of contacts. There's a need out there. Pederson talked about high rental costs and the difficulty of finding affordable housing. He talked more about assistance with housing.

Bjerstedt, who is on the River Falls Housing Authority Board, said they struggle with landlords are not interested in accepting folks with vouchers. He suggested working together to help solve that problem. Pederson would welcome that.

Watson is supportive of the project, and it is a good use of the funds. He asked if there were other sources of income to this fund in the future aside from TID 4 and repayment of the loans. Simpson said yes, there is an accounts receivable from the Eco Village project. He expects an additional approval of one-year extension of the TIDs and spoke further about the TIDs. He said there also may be the American Recovery Plan. He provided further details.

Aldersperson Gagne expressed his favor for the loan. He talked about the City working with ONP. He spoke favorably about ONP and wants to see their mission grow.

With no further discussion, the Mayor asked for a vote on the motion. The roll call vote passed unanimously 7-0 with all voting in favor.

REPORTS:

Administrator's Report

Simpson said we are moving a summary format for administration report. He will provide the City's practices on herbicide to the Council. Simpson talked about the City organization and its response to Covid saying we are taking a slow approach and are monitoring guidelines. We will likely react slower than other workplaces. Simpson provided further details.

Plunkett talked about Covid saying cases are not dropping nationally. Locally, there has been a reduction. What information do we have about variants in this area and are we monitoring wastewater to learn more?

Simpson said Assistant City Administrator Stroud is still in contact with the counties. We are relying on their surveillance and best practices. He is not aware of any variant monitoring. Wastewater has not been identified by public health to be helpful. It's of interest - good base data - but not a priority for public health to review. We are keeping an eye on the community testing numbers. We are all waiting for American Recovery Plan wondering if that means we will get regional testing sites and other possibilities. Simpson put in plug for

vaccinations. They have spots available and he encouraged eligible people to get vaccinated. Simpson asked if Stroud had additions.

Stroud said in terms of the City's work force, we have done well in getting police and fire opportunities for vaccinations. Recently, those opportunities have opened up for front line utility staff which is good news for us. We are still in contact with public health. We have decreased meetings with public health so they can focus on vaccination clinics. Staff has a meeting with the Pierce County Health Director soon. We can ask her questions about variants then.

At 7:38 p.m., MS Bjerstedt/Morrisette move to adjourn. The roll call vote passed 7-0 with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi McKahan, Deputy Clerk