

Minutes of the Public Works and Public Utilities Committee for Monday, December 5, 2011.

The meeting was called to order by Alderman Simmons at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Grenke, Aldermen Wilkins, Bormann, Angell, and Sanders. Also attending were Lynn Behrns, Mike Forsee, Phil Hoffman, Mark Mustain, Police Chief Larry Dudgeon, Art Dollens, Darryl Spauldin, Dennis Whitaker, David Whitaker, LeeAllen Smith, Don Bobbitt, and James Smith.

Those present participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Comments from Citizens

Dennis and David Whitaker were present to discuss the action taken by the Board of Aldermen to vacate a twenty-foot portion of the right-of-way of North Rollins between their business and that of Forrest Chevrolet. Dennis Whitaker of 60850 N. Route Z said he wanted to express concern about the procedure for the street vacation. He thought it unfair that he had not received notification through a personal letter or visit from City staff. David Whitaker of 106 W. Southgate said the process was “not neighborly” and not in the spirit expected by the citizens of a small town. He said that the City failed to follow its own requirements for a notice to be at least 15 days in advance of the hearing. Behrns said the section cited by Whitaker was only for zoning changes. Different parts of the City Code or State statutes may have different hearing and notice requirements. He said that street vacation or acceptance of street rights-of-ways required recommendations by the Planning and Zoning Commission, but had no specific requirements for notices. However, he agreed in hindsight that it would have been preferable for him to have sent a letter as notice to the property owners on the west side of the street. Sanders said he had asked at the last Board meeting whether the neighbors had any objections to the vacation; and he had been told there were none. He asked if he had been misled by the City Administrator. Behrns answered that he had put proper notice in the paper for both the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting and that of the Board of Aldermen meeting. He had not sent any personal notice to adjoining property owners or occupants, since this was not a procedural requirement. Behrns said that his answer only related to the fact that he had not received any sort of comment in response to the notices. In hindsight, he acknowledged that this was not as clear as the Board needed. Sanders said that had he known of the Whitakers’ concerns, he likely would have voted differently.

Behrns said that he was willing to follow a suggestion by Whitaker’s attorney to recommend that the Board make the area adjacent to any new addition of Forrest’s buildings be a “no parking” zone. Wilkins asked if this would help. Dennis Whitaker said yes; part of his concern was that trucks needed to make wide turns to drive into D & D Tires to be serviced. An addition to Forrest Chevrolet, with the parking along the new wall moved traffic even farther to the west and would block the ability of the trucks to make the turn.

Spauldin proposed that the City Code be amended so that P & Z would have fixed times and notification requirements for assigned to hearings prior to vacations of public streets. Aldermen said that this was worth looking into. Behrns said he has already taken steps to be sure that also public notices and advertisement are also posted to the City’s web site.

Behrns said that Forrest may never build the proposed addition to their current building. They also have a possible alternative of relocating to a new site west of Highway 124 and south of Highway 22. A decision has not yet been made. If the relocation is selected, then it would be possible for the property owner to rededicate the vacated portion of the street back to the City. Brad Forrest has

indicated to Behrns of a willingness to do this.

Dollens characterized as the matter as a “land grab”. He said he considered the proceedings undemocratic and hidden from the public. Spaulding asked if the City had “legal remedies” to address the Whitakers’ problem. Bormann said that the vacations were a done deal from the time the ordinance was agreed to. The property owner would have to voluntarily give back the property or the City could possibly condemn the property. Angell told the Whitakers that the City would try to deal with their concerns in good faith.

Behrns said that the Whitakers’ objection does not change his initial recommendation, which was made to benefit the viability of an important local business, since he did not perceive or intend that it harm another important local business.

Streets and Sanitation

Committee reviewed the activity report and future work schedule for the Street and Sanitation Departments.

Hoffman told Sanders that the dumpster placed behind 105 N. Allen Street represented the start of dismantling what remains of that building. There have been no takers for materials. Hoffman will save some bricks for repair of the front masonry wall edges; the remainder will be used on site as fill.

Staff reported that a refurbished street sweeper was available at a low cost. Alderman Angell saw the field demo of a very expensive version of the machine. Hoffman said more this design was more effective and flexible than our current Elgin machine. Since the asking price was much less (at \$28,000) than staff’s best guess for a refurbished Elgin, this will more easily fit into the General Fund budget. Committee gave permission to Hoffman to go to St. Louis and check out the actual machine being offered. If he finds it acceptable, the purchase will be an item on the agenda of the regular Board meeting.

Water and Sewer Department

Committee reviewed the activity report and future work schedule for the Water and Sewer Department.

Forsee distributed an updated bid from Scott Keith for more SCADA equipment for the water system. This has been long discussed and the need is becoming more paramount. Many parts of the old monitoring and control system are no longer available. Some of the equipment is obsolete. The new system would even replace the need for dedicated telephone wires that are faltering, using radio links instead. The bid totaled \$94,544.00. This would be the biggest, but not final, phase of upgrades. Some of the control panels at the treatment plant will remain to be replaced. Behrns believes that, since there are no opportunities for installing or replacing mains for the remainder of the fiscal year, the water fund has the balances necessary to do the SCADA work this year. Actual work may take a couple months. Forsee said that DNR still presses the City about lack of constant oversight at the treatment plant. The upgraded system holds off their regular suggestions of staffing for 24/7. Approval of this purchase will be on the next regular agenda. Forsee will also get a more detailed description and cost for what work would remain for a phase 3.

Staff followed up on a question at the last Board meeting concerning water quality. Alderman Orsini’s answer in the next Fireside Guard was very good and complete. Forsee described the process of

testing for DNR. The question comes from a citizen reading reports on an internet web site. While some items appear to be red-flagged, a proper reading of the site shows that Centralia's water to be of highest quality. Behrns noted that the group behind the web site has a particular agenda to pursue.

Forsee presented a quote from Flynn for labor and materials to replace one of the high service effluent pumps at the NE treatment lagoons. (The motor for the pump is okay.) The pump has been in use for about 24-25 years and has become badly corroded. Similar problems may be repeated in the other pumps over the next few years. Without a backup, staff believes it important to replace the pump before irrigation season. Next year, staff noted, work on a pump at the NW lift station may be necessary. Approval of Flynn's bid of \$9,997.00 will be on the next regular agenda.

Electric Department

Committee reviewed the activity report and future work schedule for the Electric Department.

Preliminary Budget

Behrns reviewed in broad strokes potential items to be initiated during the rest of the fiscal year and in next year's budget: The Electric Fund is healthy. No rate increase is proposed because wholesale power costs should be lower—even with the inclusion of Prairie State. The next budget would propose purchase of a GIS System for the City for about \$79,200, including much field survey work and data entry. Fund accounting software will cost about \$30,000, depending upon the number of modules initially selected. Staff requests replacement of the chipper at a cost of \$35,000. The present chipper has now been in service for 20 years. Even with these expenditures, the fund reserve balance will stop declining and should instead grow by about \$150,000. The draft budget will recommend a transfer of \$80,000 from the Electric Fund to the General Fund.

Balancing the General Fund with appropriate reserves is close. Allowing for the patrol cars purchased this month, the City should be able to complete work on 105 N. Allen, and buy a replacement dump truck for \$88,680 (if no replacement fire truck is identified.) If a fire truck comes up after the start of the next fiscal year, it can be financed by monies can borrowed temporarily from the Electric Fund. Phase 2 of the Miles Street ditch project to its north end should possible for \$31,000. Behrns said the budget could also include another \$7,500 for incentives to demolish dilapidated houses and also the cost of one more replacement heater for the street shop.

For the Water Fund, deferring construction of mains allows for the SCADA purchase. The fund would repeat a transfer of \$30,000 to the General Fund (equal to this year). An appropriation of \$50,000 would be available for work on Well No. 6 (the oldest) and to add \$12,500 to reserves for future work on the other two wells. The regular reserve for emergency Plant repairs repeats at 100,000. Forsee reports that the loading dock doors at the treatment plant need replacement. \$5,000 is being used as a place-holding estimate. The budget would include replacing one pickup for a cost of \$18,331. No rate increase is suggested by Behrns because fund balances should be stable and the trash rate has just increased and sewer rates should rise.

Behrns is looking at a potential 5-6% increase for sewer rates. This will become more specific in the next month and a half when details are clarified. The first budget pass includes \$35,000 for more sliplining of deficient mains. The sewer equipment reserve would be at \$26,879 (or less if lift station pump repairs are necessary). The need to react to a possible expansion of Benoit's irrigation layout (by adding connection to new pivots and maybe a new pond) would be speculative. If this comes about, Behrns would recommend a one year loan from the Electric Fund. Forsee told Angell that

sliplining prices are coming down as more vendors enter the market. Centralia intends again to piggy back on the bidding of a larger city or multiple-cities. Spaulding suggested that sliplining makes it easier for contractors to repair existing taps or make new ones.

Behrns said the Sanitation Fund should be okay after the recent rate increase, with adequate reserves for landfill care and a growing reserve for replacement of the trash truck in a few years.

Other

Behrns said that to correct a mistaken designation for a twenty-five foot building line in the Mystic Ridge Subdivision Plat, the original preparer has prepared a document attesting to a "scrivener's error". The Board will be asked to make a motion at the next Board meeting to allow Behrns to sign a similar document.

No bids were received for the surplus police car. The dealer from Chicago told Chief Dudgeon that he had also decided not to bid. Board told Behrns that it would be okay to take the car to the auto auction on Route Z at Interstate 70. Sanders said he has a dealer's license and might want to bid. The auction was an acceptable venue to do this.

John Kohlman of MoDOT called and said he is sending a price quote and short agreement for the City to add plaques for the 2011 Softball Champions to the five city limit signs.

Behrns reminded the committee that Surgeon will host a meeting of Boone County cities and the County Commissioners on December 21st.

Behrns said that unless the aldermen object he will be renewing employee health insurance coverage at a 16% rate increase (6% of payroll). He has asked for rate quotations for a possible new Missouri Rural Water Association program for next year. Employees have been told about options that are cheaper and might leave money for salary raises. However, they also have higher up-front costs to participants. In union negotiations Behrns plans to offer continuing the present option, but after January 1 to set pay for newly hired employees' spouses at 50% coverage (now 100%, or none if spouse has access to insurance from own job. This would not be retroactive to present employees unless there is a change of family status.

Hoffman told Simmons that the City had just received an extra load of road salt and will order Sodium Chloride when appropriate. Several trucks and spreaders have recently been repaired or winterized and will be ready for the first storm.

Mayor Grenke noted that the flags were to be flown at half-staff for Dec. 7 in remembrance of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Bobbitt suggested that when the City gets a replacement street sweeper, it should make sure it has a hose attachment for vacuuming leaves.

The Committee adjourned at about 8:45 p.m.