

Minutes of the General Government and Public Safety Committee meeting of Monday, August 12, 2013.

The meeting was called to order by Alderman Wilkins at 7:00 p.m. Present were Aldermen Magley, Simmons, Bormann, Angell, and Lee. Also attending were Lynn Behrns, Police Lieutenant Robert Bias, Patrol Officer Joe Bellamy, Fire Chief Denny Rusch, Jason Scott, and James Smith.

Those present participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Comments from Citizens

Scott asked if the Committee had any response to his questions from the preceding meeting. Bias and Bellamy responded with a written report which gave the reasons why the City has not issued a peace disturbance citation for the fire alarm which rang for several hours over a holiday weekend. State statute definitions mean that the charge would have to show the incident was deliberate. In this case, personnel were trying hard to properly end the noise of the alarm. Therefore, no crime had occurred. Mr. Scott received this answer with apparent skepticism. He then asked why he had not received a written answer to his complaint against the police officer who arrested him for trespassing after he repeatedly refused to leave the Police Station. Committee members told him that the complaint would be handled by Mayor Grenke, who is out of town. Scott said that he would be serving a 65-day jail sentence, but would return for the response at the first meeting of the Aldermen after he was released.

City Prosecutor

No report.

Fire Department

Fire Chief Rusch presented a report of July activities of the Fire Department.

Rusch said that the firefighters are keeping a close eye on fire truck #1102. There is some indication of a transmission problem. Because the truck would have to be taken to St. Louis for any transmission repair, the firefighters are just monitoring the situation, so long as the truck is operable.

Police Department

Bias presented a report of July activities and calls to the Police Department. Committee members had no questions.

Behrns present draft ordinances that aggregate and update some traffic regulations (which are not otherwise in the City Code). One ordinance lists the location of stop and yield signs. The other has lists of various zones where there are limitations on parking. (Only zones for truck parking and designation of handicapped parking spaces are in the Code.) Each of the drafts collects the provisions of many existing ordinance into one, simpler reference. Both of the new ordinances will be on the next Board agenda.

Bias requested that City again subscribe to LeadsOnline. Centralia had once used the service, but not frequently enough to justify the large expense. Recently, there has been an increase in burglaries and thefts where the stolen property may be taken to pawn shops or scrap metal dealers. With LeadsOnline, the department can access a data base of items and customers using pawn shops and scrap dealers and compare this data to local crimes. Behrns has analyzed current financial reports and believes that the City can handle the fee of \$1,488 per year for three years. He has prepared an ordinance for the next Board meeting to allow the Mayor to sign a subscription agreement.

Emergency Management

No report.

Protective Inspection

The City closed on the sale of property at 105 N. Allen Street.

Behrns said that the permits issued for new housing has now reached 15 units for the year

A dangerous structure notice has been mailed concerning the house at 535 S. Allen. This is a house which has been vacant for more than five years and has deteriorated beyond repair. It has a new owner, who has indicated that he intends to demolish the house.

Economic Development

Behrns noted that the agenda packet contained a report from Barry Stevens on CREDI activities. The upcoming City newsletter will include a sheet from CREDI and the Chamber of Commerce promoting the Purchase with a Purpose program.

Wilkins said that he had received an email from Barry Stephens, announcing that Stephens is resigning as president of CREDI. No replacement representative has been selected.

Park Department

The Park Board minutes for the July meeting were in the Committee agenda packet.

Cemetery Advisory Committee

No report.

Tree Board

No report.

Library Board

No formal report was made, but an agenda for the next meeting was presented in the agenda packet.

Finance

Financial statements for July were in the agenda packet. One third of the way through the fiscal year, expenditures and financial resources seem to be tracking as expected.

Bills over \$1,250

Committee received a preliminary list of bills over \$1,250. They had no initial questions.

Other

The regular Board meeting will include an advertized public hearing on property tax rates and an ordinance to set those rates for the general fund, park and recreation, library and library debt service. Because the quirks of state statutes, the City was able to increase some of the rates by hundredths of a cent. This is not very consequential, less than \$1 on the typical house. Behrns has advertized the rates at the maximum permissible, based on the State Auditors website calculator. This might change as the division of real estate and personal property include in the total for State assessed property becomes known. If the final cap is lower, the ordinance will be amended downward. If higher, the

advertized rate will be used. The rate for the library debt service fund does not have a cap, but will be held stable, since only three or so years remain on the underlying bond issue, and reserves are adequate.

Representatives of Williams Keepers will be on hand to present the final audit for the fiscal year which ended March 31. Behrns expects this to be a “clean” audit, as usual. As soon as a pdf of the report is received, Behrns will have it sent to the Aldermen electronically for advanced review.

Behrns has discussed architectural work for the City Hall repairs and upgrades with John Simon of Simon Associates. Simons has submitted a proposal, which was included in the Committee agenda packet. The proposal sets forth labor rates and estimates for costs of several services. The cost to the City would be for actual work at the described rates, plus expenses, for a final bill not to exceed \$15,500 for City Hall and Police Station work, and \$5,500 for ADA improvements to the City Square gazebo. Behrns does not believe that many of the work items will be necessary because some of the work will be done with city employees and not require bid documents. Bormann said that he could likely provide some surveying work for no charge—an additional savings. An ordinance will be on the next Board agenda to accept the proposal and allow the Mayor to sign a contract. Behrns will need to refer the gazebo renovations to the Park Board at its next meeting. The gazebo expenses will be charged to Park accounts.

As May Arise

Behrns told the Committee about conversations he had with Angell and Russ Green about how to increase the number of parking spaces near the building on Railroad. Changing parallel parking spaces to diagonal spaces on the south side of the street would add only two new spaces. Changing parallel spaces to diagonal spaces on the north side of the street could add up to 16 additional spaces.

At present, there are four car spaces and a length devoted to parking long trucks. The change on the north would require the loss of about one-half of the City's designated truck parking. Several of the spaces at the west end would only be available to compact cars. Diagonal parking on either side will only leave 20.4 feet for the two travel lanes. Committee discussed whether the City had an obligation to provide semi-truck parking, but came to no conclusion. After a review of the choices and history, Committee decided that Behrns and Angell can tell Green that the City is open to dropping the truck parking and marking the entire length of the block for parallel parking of automobiles. However, they will not make such a change until the potential tenants for Green's building are identified and their need for parking is estimated. Green will be able to assure the potential tenants for the floor space on the first story that parking can be expanded if needed. Behrns noted that there is open space in the rear of the building which could be used for parking for tenants of upstairs apartments.

Committee discussed staff research into a citizen's concern that an EPA website listed several violations for the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant. Behrns has shared email responses from two DNR employees. They indicate that the EPA site is in error. They are not aware of any true violations.

Neither is the City staff. Staff has received occasional letters of warning. These have been minor and were addressed before rising to the level of violations. Two or three of the “violations” appear to refer high ammonia levels from third party tests of the receiving creek and not to plant discharges; the plant may just be the closest reference facility. Regardless, the City has not permitted any wastewater discharge since June 2010. There cannot be a violation of discharge limits when there is no discharge.

There seems to be a communications problem between DNR computers and EPA computers, and EPA has declined to make any changes.

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Magley asked staff to contact the COLT Railroad to have them mow grass on their side of the fence which runs east of Columbia Street and west of the railroad tracks.

The Committee then adjourned at about 8:15 p.m.

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