



City of Charleston, MO
204 N. Main Street; Charleston, MO 63834
PH 573.683.3325; FX 573.683.3297

Charleston City Council
May 9th, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Mayor, Patrick Farmer at 6:30 PM. Mayor Pro-Tem, Jackie Whiteside, Councilman, Clark Dugan, Councilman, Rick Toon, Councilwoman, Monica Goodin, City Manager, Philip Halter, City Attorney, Tabatha Graham, City Clerk, Ali Morris, Chief of the Department of Public Safety, Robert Hearn, Jr., and Steve Myers from the local newspaper were also present.

Presentation of Plaque: At this time, Mayor Farmer presented a plaque to outgoing Mayor, Rick Toon, on behalf of the city for his time and efforts during his term of April 2022-April 2023.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: A motion was made by Councilman Toon to approve the minutes from the April 11, 2023, regular session council meeting and also from the April 25, 2023, special call meeting. Councilman Dugan seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed and the minutes were approved.

Report of City Business: City Manager, Philip Halter said he just wanted to highlight a few items in his report. He began by stating that he had spoken with MODOT regarding the Mississippi River bridge and that it did open back up on May 1st and that repairs will be made later in the fall of this year. They have lowered the speed limit to 25 mph and 18 wheelers are still allowed to travel across as long as they are not fully loaded.

Mr. Halter then explained that he met with Lee Hess, Mike McIlroy, and David Harris and they evaluated the park projects and discussed the possibility of more projects since there will be some funds left over once current projects are completed. Mr. Halter mentioned that the restrooms that we had been expecting for several months were finally delivered and installed at Charles Williams Park.

After a meeting with Rich Cochran prior to last month's council meeting, the city sent out solicitations for engineering companies to begin the process to make the necessary upgrades to our lagoon.

An update was given on the work going on at the water plant. The valves that were ordered in December of 2021 have slowly been arriving a few at a time. Mr. Halter said that all of them should be in by July 17th.

Mr. Halter then explained that he attended a Bootheel Regional Planning meeting where the work on Exit 12 was discussed. The work is set to begin on May 15th and will most likely take at least a year to complete. They said that one lane should be open at all times. The City Manager also mentioned that the sitework could possibly affect the diesel fuel tax from Flying J and even Casey's General Store as those two businesses will be most affected.

At this time, Mr. Halter stated that the Country Mart building and the Charleston Plaza sold for a little less than half a million dollars altogether. He said he spoke to the buyers, and they all plan on cleaning up the properties. He explained to them that if they did not get it cleaned up, he would proceed with the demolition process.

Councilwoman, Monica Goodin, questioned the police software that was mentioned in the City Manager's report. She asked if the cost mentioned in the report would be in addition to something we are already paying. Mr. Halter said yes, and that he would provide that information for her to review.

Mr. Halter then moved on to reference the budget report for the month of April. Although the budget meeting had already been held, he reiterated that we did go over budget within the Transportation Fund as we paid off so many leases. He also mentioned that although we had a total budget of 7 million, we only ended up spending about 6.5 million.

The bills paid in the month of April 2023 in excess of \$5,000 were included in the council packets. Some were reoccurring monthly bills. Mr. Halter mentioned that a blower was replaced at a lift station, which was a big expense. We also purchased fuel in April and that was expensive but is not a monthly purchase. Mr. Halter also explained that the city did not receive the bills for the new health insurance until April, so that is why it looked so expensive. It was four months' worth, all paid for in April.

The City Manager then moved onto the Public Works Report. He did not touch on anything specific within the report but mentioned that after the storm that blew through on Monday evening, the public works department had been working all day to clean up three major trees that had fallen. Mr. Halter explained that they were waiting for contractors to show up to give quotes on the cleanup jobs and that the trees that fell from the city easements would be cleaned up by the city, but that property damage to the homes would have to be reported to the homeowners' insurance companies.

Moving on to the report from the Code Enforcement Officer, Mr. Halter explained that they already have five hearings scheduled for the month of May for public nuisances. He also mentioned that he has asked the Code Enforcement Officer to develop a list of local contractors that would be willing to be contacted by the homeowners with issues so that most of these instances can hopefully be handled and repaired before we end up having to demolish the structures. Mr. Halter then mentioned that after six vehicles were tagged last month, all of them

either ended up getting current licenses, or were moved, so none had to be towed and we are very thankful for that. Councilman Toon asked if the officer keeps the complainant informed of what is going on with the process for these instances of public nuisances. Mr. Halter said yes, he does, but most cases are not from complaints. The officer simply drives around town and finds most of the situations himself.

In regard to the Department of Public Safety report, Mr. Halter pointed out that there was a zoom meeting held to discuss and learn about the Flock Safety software, which was on the agenda to discuss later in the meeting. He also mentioned that 62.8 pounds of medication was collected for disposal during the DEA's Prescription Takeback Day on April 22nd. After questions were asked regarding the prescription drugs, Chief Hearn explained that the collection box is always available, but there are also dedicated dates for collections.

It was noted that the city is in need of a new dog pound, but that is not currently in our budget. The existing facility can hold up to six dogs and is regularly inspected by the state to make sure we are in compliance. Councilman Whiteside asked about the lady who offered to be a contact to take dogs and Chief Hearn explained that she doesn't always have room and it can take weeks for her to have a spot available. Mr. Halter explained that the city is aware of the ongoing dog issue and that it is never-ending. Traps have been set, the dog catcher has captured some dogs and returned them to their owner(s), but apparently, they continue to let them run loose. Sheila Shankle from the visitors' section spoke up and stated that she accidentally hit a loose dog with her vehicle recently and now has over \$500 worth of damage to pay for.

Old Business: Mayor Farmer read the only item under Old Business and Mr. Halter explained that this ordinance was referred to earlier in his report, regarding the Flock Safety software. The proposal and agreement were included in the council packets. Chief Hearn explained that they want to put in cameras at six different locations. This software would just read license plates. The cameras are not looking at people. The information collected would be shared with other networks who also have the software. Councilman Whiteside asked if the software was just in Missouri. Chief Hearn explained that the software is installed in multiple other states and the information is shared amongst them all. Mr. Halter mentioned that the proposal includes the upfront cost, but it can be canceled at any time after the initial two years. Councilman Toon made a motion to approve the adoption of **Bill NO. 3929/Ordinance NO. 3070** to approve a contract between the Charleston Department of Public Safety and Flock Safety. Councilman Whiteside seconded the motion. None were opposed. The motion passed.

New Business: Mayor Farmer read the first item under new business, which was to discuss potential improvements for the 2024 Dogwood-Azalea Festival. The City Manager stated that although the festival brings a big drawl of people to town, it is also expensive to do so. He then mentioned that he intends to ask the Chamber of Commerce to consider paying the city for the extra costs. During the festival, the city pays both the Department of Public Safety and the Public Works Department overtime for the extra hours working the parade, carnival, and cleaning up the parks. Councilman Whiteside asked if the Sheriff's Department would be willing to help patrol the festival. Chief Hearn said that they do help with the parade and then try to keep at least one person close to town over the weekend, in case help is needed, but they are short-handed just like the city's department is. Mr. Halter then explained that he spoke to

Jayne Ellen Ray from the CHARM group, and she will be providing totals on what was spent from the Hotel/Motel Tax funds given to them by the city and will also be getting those specific numbers from Karen Teeters with the Chamber of Commerce. Councilman Whiteside said it would be good to get the numbers on a regular basis. Mr. Halter mentioned that since the tax has been distributed, the amount is significant.

Next on the agenda was Mr. Mike Mueller to discuss another potential festival. At this time, Mr. Mueller addressed the room and explained his plans for a "Watermelon/Gospel Music Event" for July 28th and 29th. Mr. Muller said this event will hopefully engage families in Charleston, particularly children, and will teach them about our past. There are plans for Bingo trials, a parade, a fish fry, and dancing. Tony Jones from East Prairie will be a DJ, and games will be set up on Saturday, including a watermelon seed spitting contest, and a Charleston-invented game, involving rolling a watermelon and then busting it to enjoy the heart. Mr. Mueller explained that he has spoken with the ministerial alliance and Mitch Pullen who have offered to help organize the event and hopes that it will be a wonderful weekend. He then said he hopes the council will endorse the idea, along with a community market, beginning this Saturday to be set up at 303 East Marshall, from 8AM-12PM. Mr. Mueller also touched on the 4H class and their new project which consists of a test kitchen with scheduled events and cuisine themes. The schedule was included in a handout provided by Mr. Mueller. There will be tickets sold for the events to help pay for the meal prep. Councilman Whiteside thanked Mr. Mueller and commended him on all of his efforts.

Next on the agenda was the consideration of **Bill NO. 3927/Ordinance NO. 3068** to authorize the purchase of new jet rod equipment for use by the Department of Public Works. The City Manager explained that this was a budgeted item for this current fiscal year and the original cost is \$114,000, but they have agreed to credit us \$25,000 for our old equipment as a trade-in. He also explained that our current equipment has engine problems and this calls for a good opportunity to upgrade. Councilwoman Goodin asked if the equipment will be brand new. Mr. Halter said yes, and the previous one was purchased new as well. Councilman Toon asked about the warranty information and Mr. Halter said he would get that information and provide it to them. Councilman Whiteside made a motion to approve the purchase of the new jet rod equipment. Councilman Toon seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion and Bill. NO. 3927/Ordinance NO. 3068 passed.

Bids from both Paving Pros and ASA Asphalt were provided in the council packets along with **Bill NO. 3928/Ordinance NO. 3069** to discuss street repairs and the parking lot at AD Simpson Park. Mr. Halter explained that street overlay projects are always budgeted each year, but this year we also need work to be done at AD Simpson Park as part of the park upgrades. About \$113,000 will be needed just to cover the costs of the parking lot. Mr. Halter said he has already spoken to Mr. Reggie Young regarding the cost, and they have agreed to pay this amount for the parking lot at the park with the park donation funds. Councilman Whiteside noted that we have used ASA Asphalt in the past and they have done good work. They also came in as the lowest bid for these projects. With this being said, Councilman Whiteside made a motion to pass the proposal from ASA Asphalt. Councilwoman Goodin seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion and Bill NO. 3928/Ordinance NO. 3069 passed.

At this time, it was acknowledged that procedure was changed, and recognition of visitors has been moved to the end of the meeting.

Recognition of Visitors: Russell Baker, Sherry Austin, Catie Austin, Mike Mueller, Rodney Jones, Sheila Shankle, Tiffany Shankle, Ann Riggins, Hudson Byrd, and Cal Coleman were present.

Mr. Russell Baker addressed the council, stating his concern was regarding the dog issue, which is affecting not only him, but others as well. He expressed his concern and stated that he came to see if the council had any suggestions on what the citizens could do to help the city handle the dog situations. Mr. Baker noted that he often watches situations with these animals play out from his driveway and asked for any input on what he can do.

The City Manager responded to Mr. Baker explaining that the Animal Control Officer often works seven days a week dealing with these situations. Chief Hearnese said he hopes to get a veterinarian back into town so that they would be able to get darts to use on the animals.

Unfortunately, right now they must travel to Sikeston to get the darts and then only have so long to use them before having to return them if they are not used. Chief Hearnese also said that he hopes to have a better plan in place by next month. He also said that it seems that people are dumping dogs in town, making it a larger issue to deal with. Councilwoman Goodin asked if the vet's office here in town would be willing to help house some of these dogs if we are able to capture them. Chief Hearnese said that is a good idea and they would ask about that.

Sheila Shankle mentioned that the dog she hit with her vehicle was running loose with another dog and that it was the middle of the day when she hit it. She stated that she called dispatch but was placed on a long hold.

Barbara Cleaves stated that she has seen loose dogs be captured by the Animal Control Officer, but that he continues to return them to their owners who then continue to let them run loose again. They are not wearing collars, so no one wants to claim them when it comes time to writing tickets for loose dog violations. She said absolutely nothing is being done about the situation.

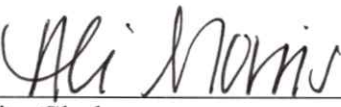
Jayne Ellen Ray addressed the council to report on where the funds received from the city for the Hotel/Motel tax have been used. She then reported how much was spent to pay for the hot air balloons that were set up by Aerial Advantage during the Dogwood-Azalea Festival. She also explained that because the wind was so strong, they never launched the balloons, but at least about 25 people showed up. She stated that another report will be given in six months on where they stand with the funds.

Cal Coleman spoke up from the audience and got defensive whenever Mr. Halter attempted to address him. He stated that in his previous life working in television that he had never seen a city meeting run the way Charleston runs theirs. He said he didn't know anyone's names or titles, or how to address them. He then proceeded to complain about his previous encounter with the City Clerk who asked for his name to be placed in the minutes at last month's council meeting. He claimed that she never introduced herself and demanded his name. City Attorney, Tabatha Graham spoke up at this point and told Mr. Coleman that the Clerk was simply doing her job by asking his name and that he refused to give it to her. The Clerk attempted to apologize that she did not introduce herself but did ask for his name so it could be provided in

the minutes. Mr. Coleman asked if he had to give it to her and she told him she was supposed to get it for the minutes. After a moment went by, she walked away and noted that he "wished to remain anonymous" in the April meeting minutes.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Councilwoman Goodin to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Dugan seconded the motion. All were in favor. The regular meeting was adjourned, and the council went into a closed session to discuss personnel and the potential sale of city-owned property.

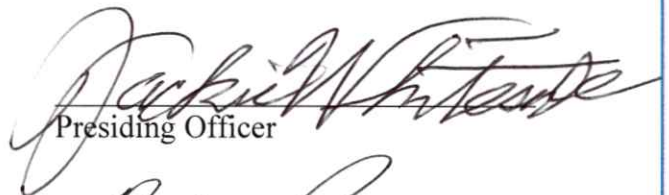
ATTEST:



City Clerk



City Clerk



Presiding Officer



Mayor