



City of Charleston, MO

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**City Council
August 9, 2022**

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Mayor Rick Toon. Also in attendance were council members Jackie Whiteside and Patrick Farmer. Councilman Clark Dugan phoned in and participated over speaker phone. Interim City Manager Philip Halter, City Clerk Ali Morris, City Attorney Tabatha Thurman, and Chief of the Department of Public Safety, Robert Hearn Jr., and Steve Myers from the local newspaper, were also present.

Recognition of Visitors: Karen Teeters, Ronnie Riggins, Tiffani Thomas, Chedowry Thomas, Gwen Wade, Rodney Jones, Pam Jones, Larry McCauley, Jayne Ellen Ray, Sheila Shankle, Erica Jones, and Arthur Cassell.

Mayor Toon said that he is proud of Charleston. He said that we have picked up some momentum and that as a city, we need to continue to bring people in here and work as hard as we can to bring people together. He then went on to say that he had just spoken at a family member's funeral and asked that everyone bear with him as he was still emotional.

Mr. Rodney Jones addressed the council. Mayor Toon apologized because he did not inform anyone to put Mr. Jones on the agenda. Mr. Jones explained that he and his wife, Pam Jones, decided to purchase the old Ameren factory building and are working on putting in a skilled labor facility but that they have ran into a hiccup in the process. There is an abandoned alley/road that runs through the property that needs to be addressed before they will be able to move forward. They both explained that they love the city of Charleston and have spent most of their lives here raising their six children. Mrs. Jones has worked within the Charleston school district for twelve years. Together they have served the City of Charleston in many ways, one of those being through their non-profit organization, "Meet the Need" which provided food and supplies to thousands of people within the community during the recent pandemic. Mrs. Jones explained that they have already begun the process for the Ameren building and have spoken to local state representatives and senators who have given their support. The hopes for the building are to not only be a skilled labor facility, but to also serve as a secondary resource to store supplies for disaster relief for Mississippi County. Councilman Whiteside asked if the alleyway West of the church behind Telker Road and the alleyway serve any purpose. Everyone said no. Both are fenced in, within the complex, and are not accessible to residents. Mayor Toon said that he and the Interim City Manager, Phil Halter both attended the meeting at the former Ameren building recently and that there is a lot of interest in what can be done there. Mr. Jones also mentioned that the building needs renovations and that he has already invested \$200,000 of his own money into it. Mayor Toon asked Mr. Jones to speak to the Interim City Manager and the City Attorney regarding funding.

Mayor Toon said this is what he was talking about regarding momentum.

Jayne Ellen Ray then addressed the council and gave an update on the property that CHARM recently purchased between Dr. Petersen's Dental Office, and The Dogwood Nutrition. She said that the tree has been removed and they are in the process of getting the rest cleaned up. She said that the community can expect to see some seating going in, along with some botanicals and a mural. Mayor Toon said that he appreciated what they are doing, and for the update.

Tiffani Thomas then stood up and said that she was sorry, but she had to acknowledge a negative issue, which is what she described as a serious dog problem around Elm and Lafayette Street. Mrs. Thomas said that these wild dogs congregate near the bus stop and with school starting back up soon, this is a major concern.

These dogs are already a danger because they have attacked people and she and others on Elm Street have called the dog catcher, but he apparently does not have the tools that he needs to handle the dogs. Interim City Manager, Philip Halter, spoke up and noted that he has spoken to the Chief of Police, Bobby Hearn, on the issue and they are working together to get tranquilizer guns. Chief Hearn then explained that they are aware of the situation and the traps that have been set up, keep getting torn up and the dogs are smart enough to run away whenever they see the dog catcher vehicle. He also explained that the tranquilizers and training cost substantially more than he anticipated, and he is working on getting it figured out.

Mrs. Thomas went on to explain that members of Susanna Wesley along with the mail carriers have all experienced the danger of these dogs. Mr. Chedowry Thomas stood up and said that he understands the issues with funding and training, but he is afraid that it will be too late when a child gets injured or worse, by one of these dogs. He described the situation as "a nightmare on Elm Street" and suggested that they also look into installing some speed bumps or making more four way stops in the area because not only are the dogs a big concern, but people also use the street to "drag race" up and down at all hours. Councilman Farmer said that unfortunately, people would probably still run the stop signs. Interim City Manager, Philip Halter, said that it would at least give them (law enforcement) more of a reason to stop and give tickets if stop signs were installed. Mayor Toon contributed that East Prairie seems to have four way stops at every corner and that they could potentially help with the issue.

Mr. Chedowry Thomas also acknowledged that kids do not have many options when it comes to the park nearby. He said there is only one park pavilion, no restrooms, no basketball courts, etc. The Interim City Manager, along with Councilman Farmer spoke up and let everyone know that the park improvements are in the works and more pavilions, playground equipment, and restrooms are to be going in that area soon.

Mayor Toon suggested that if any residents living within that area see any vandalism going on within the park, to please let someone know.

At this time, Mayor Toon suggested we begin the meeting.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: Mayor Toon called for a motion to approve the minutes of the July 12, 2022; council meeting as presented. Councilman Whiteside made the motion, Councilman Farmer seconded, and the motion passed.

Report of City Business / Operations: Interim City Manager, Philip Halter provided a written report as part of the meeting packet and began by addressing the multiple bank accounts that the city holds which were mentioned at the last meeting. He explained that we have paid off some leases and loans that we had within the banks for certain city vehicles and that the only big lease we have left is for the fire station, police station and the sewer collapse. It will be a while before they are paid off.

Mr. Halter explained that the sewer lining project with Visu-Sewer is taking too long and that they should be finished by now. He said that we will be hitting them up for late fees, but they are only about 70% done with the project.

He also informed everyone that the amount of dirt that has been hauled into the area surrounding Whipple Park has eliminated the dip on the other side of the pond.

Mr. Halter then explained that the city has switched to MOPERM liability and property insurance through Coon's Insurance Company, which saved us about \$60,000 compared to our previous insurer. Mayor Toon asked if this covered labor too, and Mr. Halter replied no, that is contracted out.

At this time, Interim City Manager Philip Halter explained that the financials for the quarter were attached to his report, and that as of now, we are ahead of the budget. Mayor Toon said, "great job on getting the police cars paid off". The mayor also referred to the 2005 Ford Taurus that was recently put up for bid. He suggested that if we are only going to be getting up to \$1,000 for something like that, we should donate it to a charitable organization. Mr. Halter then explained that the vehicle was not in the best shape, and we are thankful for what we did get out of it. The money was put into the Parks fund.

The police report and the report from the Code Enforcement Officer, Ken Stevenson were referred to.

Interim City Manager, Philip Halter mentioned the condemnations the city is currently working on. He explained that there are going to be three public hearings on properties, Friday, August 12th, and one on Monday, August 15th.

There was a copy of a letter from Bill Mays included in the council packet. The letter gave authorization to remove the homeless individuals who have been living outside of his property within the Charleston Plaza. Mr. Mays also stated that he would cover the costs to clean up the property after their removal.

Interim City Manager, Philip Halter referred to the letter the city received which came from Kenny Hulshoff, explaining that the Russell Hotel has now been registered as a Historical Building.

Old Business: Interim City Manager, Philip Halter, explained that we numbered the last resolution incorrectly and we just need to resign the new one regarding signature cards for the bank. A motion was made by Councilman Whiteside, seconded by Councilman Farmer, motion passed.

Mr. Halter spoke about the situation regarding the Country Club to hook onto the city's sewer system and explained that the state requires them to go underneath the highway and gave them approval to do so. Public Works Director, David Harris, is following up with the Country Club. Mr. Halter said the city will gain additional revenue from the Country Club whenever this project is finished.

Bill NO. 3907 Ordinance NO. 3048 was addressed. The potential for this ordinance was referenced in last month's meeting regarding the increase for the water and sewer rates. Interim City Manager, Philip Halter, explained that we have had to spend a lot of money toward the water plant even though we have had grants and ARPA funding. The rates have not been raised in about three years and Mr. Halter suggested that we pass the ordinance.

Mayor Toon asked if he heard a motion to pass the water and sewer rate increase. Councilman Dugan made the motion, Councilman Whiteside seconded. No one opposed. The motion passed.

Rodney Jones spoke up from the audience and asked what the rates will be. Mr. Halter said that residential bills will be going up to \$72.00 as of October 1st. He then said that we will also put something on the water bills and in the newspaper leading up to the increase to help remind everyone.

Jayne Ellen Ray also spoke up from the audience and asked what the commercial rates would be. Mr. Halter explained that they were going up to \$1.50 per 1,000 gallons if they happen to go over the base rate of \$22.00 for up to 5,000 gallons used.

Sheila Shankle spoke up and stated that the downtown businesses are not metered. Mr. Halter explained that yes, indeed they are. She said no, they are not. City Clerk, Ali Morris, clarified that some of the businesses downtown are connected and share meters and that most of the businesses never go over the base amount unless they have a leak, and that may be why they assume they are not metered.

At this time, Interim City Manager, Philip Halter stated that the Department of Natural Resources will be enforcing that cities check the lead content in the water and that could lead to an expense down the road. This was elaborated on more during the July council meeting.

A gentleman from the audience spoke up and suggested we get funding to help with the costs, rather than raise the water rates.

Mr. Halter then explained the other costs that could potentially occur due to checking ammonia levels.

Mayor Toon mentioned that we have been working with Michael Montgomery and his engineering team to help us become eligible for grant money, but that the increase in the rates could help with that eligibility.

Mayor Toon then moved on to item number four on the agenda. He told the City Attorney that he had just forwarded her some information he was given by Kenny Hulshoff regarding the city of Charleston's process in becoming a CLG (Certified Local Government), and that we would table the topic until next month when we have more information

New Business: Bill NO. 3908 Ordinance NO. 3049 to amend Chapter 700, Article I, Section 700.010 A. 16 regarding Rules Governing the Use of Water: Security Deposit

Interim City Manager, Philip Halter explained the current procedure for residents when they are shut off for nonpayment. For many years, residents have been expected to put up a nonrefundable deposit in the amount to cover two months' worth of bills, plus late fees. Whenever residents are shut off due to nonpayment, they must pay their bill in full, pay a reconnect fee of \$50, and a new deposit of \$160. With passing this new ordinance, residents will be able to utilize their current deposits to pay toward their outstanding balance. They will still have to put up a new deposit, but we want them to be able to take advantage of existing deposits. With the passing of Bill NO. 3907 Ordinance NO. 3048, for the rate increases, the deposit will also go up to \$170.

Arthur Cassell from the audience spoke up and asked about those residents who have been shut off multiple times and who have had to pay multiple deposits. Interim City Manager, Philip Halter, explained that we cannot go backward due to bookkeeping. He then said that we can only move forward and try to do what is best from now on.

Mr. Halter then went on to explain that the reconnect fee of \$50 will remain the same.

Mayor Toon asked if there were any further questions. There were none.

A motion was made by Councilman Dugan to pass Bill NO. 3908 Ordinance NO. 3049. Councilman Farmer seconded. All were in favor. The motion carried.

Mayor Toon said he was glad we were able to pass it, and then moved on to the second agenda topic under New Business.

Regarding Charleston organizations meeting to discuss important topics and plans, Mayor Toon stated that under the Sunshine Law, two or more councilmen cannot meet, but he would like to send two members, two Chamber of Commerce members, and lead members from other organizations to meet every quarter to discuss what the city would like to try and improve on, find out what is going on, scholarship discussions, etc. City Attorney, Tabatha Thurman suggested that the meetings be called "public workshops" and as long as they are posted properly, two or more council members could attend. It was also suggested that they not call around and find out what dates people are available, just set a date and whomever shows up, shows up. Councilman Whiteside said this is why we have a City Manager, and that person should be the one attending meetings on their behalf.

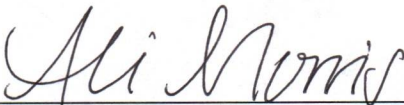
Councilman Farmer asked what the new starting rate for a potential new police officer would be. Mr. Halter said that Sikeston, Missouri offers \$19.39 starting out, with a \$3,000 sign on bonus. Scott City offers \$19.00 starting and that we are working on getting our department there.

The pay increase was then acknowledged again for the public works department and Councilman Whiteside asked again that we wait until we can look at the budget. Mr. Halter then mentioned that we must keep up with inflation and minimum wage goes up again in January.

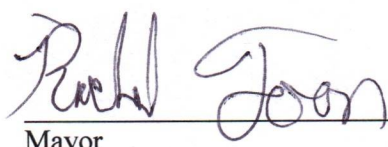
It was agreed that the \$1.00 per hour raise go into effect on the next pay period for all employees.

At this time, Councilman Whiteside said that they did not need anyone to take minutes for them to discuss candidates for the City Manager position and told the City Attorney and the City Clerk that they could leave.

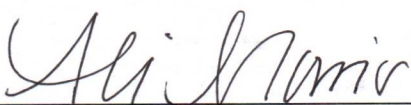
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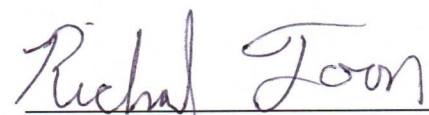
City Clerk



Mayor



City Clerk



Presiding Officer