



CITY OF CHARLESTON

City Council Meeting August 8, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM by Mayor, Patrick Farmer. Councilman Jackie Whiteside, Councilman Clark Dugan, Councilman Rick Toon, City Manager Philip Halter, City Clerk Ali Morris, City Attorney Tabatha Graham, Chief of the Department of Public Safety, Robert Hearnese Jr., Officer Mark Higgins, Officer Steven Kuykendall, and Greg Luehmann were present. Councilwoman Monica Goodin was absent.

Consideration of Prior Meeting Minutes: A motion was made by Councilman Toon to approve the July 11, 2023, regular meeting minutes and the July 24, 2023, special call meeting minutes. Councilman Dugan seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion carried, and the minutes were approved.

Report of City Business: City Manager, Philip Halter began his report by giving an update on the water plant. The roof and downspout replacement has all been completed. We are still waiting on four valves to come in. Once those arrive, the project can be completed.

The budgeted asphalt overlay project has been completed and the parking lot at AD Simpson Park was also done during this time. With that being said, "phase one" of the park project has been completed and fully paid for by donations from the Byrd Estate. Mr. Halter explained that a quote has been given to expand the project to Plainview, Hequembourg/Halter Pond, and Hillhouse Park. The quote was \$650,000 to complete "phase two" of the park projects, which will also be donated from the Byrd Estate.

With the recent rainfall, many streets were flooded, but due to very dry conditions, and the efforts of the Public Works Department keeping the streets and drains clean of debris, all of the rainfall drained very well.

Mr. Halter then mentioned that he attended a Bootheel Regional Planning meeting in Dexter. He felt it was important for people to be aware that the bridge from Missouri to Illinois over the Mississippi River will be closed as of September 1st, 2023, and will not reopen until October of 2024. He said that the speed limit is 25 mph on the bridge right now, and as of September 1st, people will have to take Exit 1 to Cairo in order to cross over into Kentucky.

At this time, Mr. Halter stated that many were probably already aware, but there was a large presence of law enforcement in Charleston recently as a drug trafficking case was being

investigated by the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the DEA, FBI, the U.S. Marshals, the Mississippi County Sheriff's Department, the Charleston Department of Public Safety, as well as other nearby police departments. This was a three-year investigation that resulted in 19 arrests within four states.

Mr. Halter stated that there were some grass fires in July, due to the dry conditions. There was one major house fire where the structure was a total loss. No one was at home at the time, so thankfully no injuries were reported. He also mentioned that there was a house fire a couple of days ago on Hunter Street that will be in next month's report. This structure was vacant and also was a total loss.

To conclude his report, Mr. Halter revealed that after many resumes were collected and interviews were held in search of a new city manager, Greg Luehmann has been hired and accepted a contract. Mr. Luehmann will become the City Manager, effective August 28th.

Councilman Toon asked about the issues regarding the city employee health insurance that was listed within the city manager report. Mr. Halter explained that the issues were regarding EOBs and that the insurance representatives were working on a few things but that we may start looking into some insurance alternatives for next year.

Councilman Whiteside said that the parks look really nice, and asked if a pavilion would be put in at "Hequembourg Pond". Mr. Halter said yes, there would be, and that the improvements at Plainview would be similar to Rolwing Park. He also mentioned that there has already been some concrete work done at the pond for the bridge/walkway that will eventually lead to a walking trail to Hillhouse Park. Mr. Whiteside explained that it was researched about twenty years ago, and "Hequembourg Pond" was put in by Mr. Halter's grandfather, but somehow became referred to over time as "Hequembourg Pond" but indeed should be Halter Pond. He suggested the city look into putting up a sign to re-establish the name.

Mr. Halter explained that additional work would be done at Hillhouse Park to install a lean-to, picnic area where people sometimes set up to cook outside of the existing stand.

Councilman Whiteside then asked if the rainwater has been draining better on North Matthews. Mr. Halter said he will have the Public Works Director keep an eye on it next time we have some significant rainfall. He also mentioned someone has complained about it not draining beside the church and the house on the very end of the street.

Councilman Toon wanted to commend the Public Works Department on their efforts to keep the drains clear so that the rainfall drained well. He said they deserve a "pat on the back".

The budget report was included in the council packets and Mr. Halter mentioned he has already gone over those with Mr. Luehmann and explained that they will begin to straighten out and make more sense as we get further into the fiscal year.

The bills paid over \$5,000 were looked over. The budgeted asphalt overlay and sealcoating project was paid for in July, which was quite a bit.

The public works report was referred to and Mr. Halter noted that motors were replaced on two wells at the water plant.

The code enforcement report was referred to next and Mr. Halter stated that a homeowner of a public nuisance on Boone Street has authorized the city to begin demolition. We are waiting for the disconnections of all utilities to be completed before proceeding.

Mr. Whiteside asked if any progress has been made on the issue at the 200 block of West Marshall. He said it is such an eyesore and the buildings have been dilapidated for many years. Mr. Halter noted that letters have been sent to the owner and we have spoken to them over the phone.

Mr. Halter then mentioned that the majority of issues the code enforcement officer is currently dealing with are overgrown lots.

The police report was next, and Mr. Halter mentioned that there was a copy of the press release included in the council packets from the U.S. Attorney, regarding the recent drug trafficking investigation, who happens to be from Charleston.

Old Business: As it has been mentioned during previous meetings, the agreement between the City of Charleston and the Charleston R-1 School District for Municipal Park use had expired, but there were some scheduling conflicts between the city manager and the superintendent. Mr. Halter and Jamarcus Williams were finally able to discuss the agreement, and nothing changed. The contract simply needed to be updated and signed by both parties. After looking it over, a motion was made by Councilman Whiteside to approve the agreement. Councilman Dugan seconded the motion. All were in favor and the agreement was approved.

New Business: The first item on the agenda under new business was consideration of **Bill NO. 3934/Ordinance NO. 3075**-An Ordinance to Execute a Contractual Agreement with Simmons Roofing. Mr. Halter explained that a roof replacement was budgeted in this fiscal year's budget for the City Hall/Police Department building. A request for proposals was ran in the newspaper and two bids were received. The lowest bid came from Simmons Roofing, and it was under budget. A motion was made by Councilman Whiteside to accept the bid proposal and approve the necessary ordinance. The motion was seconded by Councilman Toon. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion and ordinance passed.

Next on the agenda was to discuss the next solar eclipse which will take place April 8, 2024. Mr. Halter said this sounds far away, but it will be here before we know it and he feels that this is a good opportunity for a committee or organization to plan an event. Councilman Toon suggested appointing a committee and also recommended CHARM to help organize something. Councilman Whiteside noted that a large event was centered around the Anna/Carbondale, Illinois area during the last eclipse and that people traveled from all over to attend. Jayne Ellen Ray spoke up from the audience and said that the local Magnolia Campground in Bertrand is already booked up completely on this date with anticipation of the event. Everyone agreed that something should be organized, and a committee may need to be appointed by the mayor, but more discussion will be had soon.

To conclude, Mr. Halter acknowledged that the upcoming City Manager, Greg Luehmann, was sitting with the rest of the council and told him that he appreciated him coming on board. Mr. Halter explained that he took the position as interim, sixteen months ago, not expecting to be here this long. He said he has learned a lot and has enjoyed it, but believes he is passing the torch to a good man.

Recognition of Visitors: Raymond Ivy, Quender Jackson, Quenita Jenae Goodin, Talisha Mays, Jayne Ellen Ray, David Manker, Sheila Shankle, and Tiffany Shankle were present.

Mr. Raymond Ivy addressed the council and began by stating that he had already come to the council multiple times regarding the same concern. He said he came to the council on April 11, 2023, when Patrick Farmer switched over to the mayor position, about a complaint regarding the police report that had not yet been completed about him and his two daughters being threatened. He also mentioned that he had also visited the city manager in February about the same complaint. The incidents first happened in December of 2022, but there was still no completed report as of April 2023. During the April meeting, Mayor Patrick Farmer asked Chief Hearnese how long it would take for the report to be completed. Chief Hearnese said about sixty days. Mr. Ivy said it has now been over 100 days since the day he made his last complaint and still has no report. Mr. Ivy said the Chief always has excuses such as the officers are sick, on vacation, too busy, etc. He also stated that the two young men who made threats against his daughters, also shot paint and flare guns at their home and vehicle. Those young men have since been placed in custody for different reasons, but Mr. Ivy feels that they could have been in custody a lot earlier had his complaints been taken seriously. He said it seems most of his complaints go unrecognized and he has a right to be heard and given a report. Mr. Ivy said even if the responding officer no longer works for the city, it should not make a difference whether the report was completed or not. He said when he has asked about the dates of the incidents, he has been told there was no recorded activity on those dates and he needs an answer as to why, since he has cameras that show the individuals damaging his property, and the dispatchers and officers should have proof of the activity. Mr. Ivy again said he has a right as a tax paying citizen and both of his daughters have jobs in Charleston. He said the young men who he is concerned about are dangerous and have stolen guns, made threats to kidnap his daughters and he wants to know what else he can do. Mr. Ivy said he is here once again to address this issue with the council and the upcoming city manager as they supersede the current city manager and police chief and hopes they see that the police and city manager should have done their jobs. The City Attorney asked Chief Hearnese where they stand on the report. He said it is still in progress as some further investigation needs to be done. The City Attorney then stated that she cannot provide legal advice until there is a report. Mr. Ivy asked what there is to investigate and began speaking about particular officers. The City Attorney told Mr. Ivy that they were not going to get into personnel matters in open session. Mr. Ivy stood up and left at this time.

Ms. Quender Jackson addressed the council and said she just wanted to say that the old Family Dollar building, and location looks so nice, and she is thankful to whoever was able to get that area cleaned up. She said we always have to work together to accomplish something. Mr. Halter acknowledged that the city received her thank you letter and that everyone is appreciative. Ms. Jackson then mentioned that she is thankful to the public works department for keeping the

drains cleaned out, but there are still some flooding issues around the church on Grand/Ironbank Road. Mr. Halter explained that we applied for a grant to help with that issue, but we were unsuccessful. Ms. Jackson said they do a lot of raking, and that helps. Councilman Whiteside said we may need to ask the street sweeper to make more frequent trips to that particular area as there are a lot of Cypress trees through there.

Quenita Jenae Goodin addressed the council and said as a small business owner, she would like to become more engaged in the community and would like to partake in the solar eclipse project. She asked how to go about doing so and who to communicate with. Mr. Halter asked her to contact City Hall and leave her information so that we would be able to notify her whenever a committee is formed, or more information becomes available.

Talisha Mays addressed Mr. Greg Luehmann and asked him to give some details about himself. Mr. Luehmann explained that he moved to Southeast Missouri in 1989 and began working at Farm Credit in Poplar Bluff. He then moved to Charleston and became the CEO/Bank President of First Security State Bank. He said he and his wife raised their four daughters in Mississippi County. He eventually moved away to Rolla/Dixon, Missouri where he ultimately sold a bank that he was part of to move back to Cape Girardeau to become a bank president there. He recently had an opportunity to move back to Charleston about three years ago. He said he has seventeen grandchildren and all but six live here. He said he and his family think of Charleston as home, and he wants to contribute to the success of the city. Mr. Luehmann said he feels that the council has done an excellent job and he is ready to contribute as well.

Mays then asked what Mr. Luehmann's expectations are and what his plans are for the city. Mr. Luehmann replied by saying that he is very astute in finances and numbers, he has seen a lot of businesses go into communities throughout his travels and he feels that running a bank is very similar to running a city. He said he is very familiar with budgeting and working with a diverse group of people.

Mr. David Manker asked what age group AD Simpson ballpark is supposed to be for. He said the old plywood mound looks like crap and tacky in his opinion, especially with all of the recent park improvements. Mr. Halter said that was a good question and that we would look into it.

Mr. Halter announced that this time that the city has just recently received the last two quarters' hotel/motel tax and that CHARM would be given their portion this evening. He explained that we would be holding the Chamber's portion until the requested report of income and expenditures is received.

Mrs. Jayne Ellen Ray addressed the council on behalf of CHARM to thank them for their portion of the tax.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Councilman Whiteside to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Dugan seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 7:20PM.

ATTEST:

Ali Morris

City Clerk

Jackie Whitford
Presiding Officer

Ali Morris

City Clerk

Jackie Whitford
Mayor Pro Tem