



CITY OF CHARLESTON

City Council Meeting

June 11, 2024

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rick Toon at 6:30PM. Councilman Jackie Whiteside, Councilwoman Cedrica Polk, Councilman Jason Oliver, City Manager, Greg Luehmann, City Clerk, Ali Morris, Public Works Director, David Harris, Chief of Department of Public Safety, Robert Hearnese Jr., Public Safety Officer, Tyler Babb, and Public Safety Officer, Curtis Arnold were present.

Councilwoman Monica Goodin and City Attorney, Tabatha Graham were absent.

There was a last-minute amendment to the agenda due to the liquor licenses being due by July 1st. A motion was made by Councilman Oliver to approve the new agenda. Councilwoman Polk seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion carried, and the new agenda was approved.

Consideration of Prior Meeting Minutes: A motion was made by Councilman Oliver to approve the minutes from the May 14, 2024, council meeting. Councilman Whiteside seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion carried and the minutes were approved.

Report of City Business: City Manager, Greg Luehmann began his report by stating that he spoke to a concerned citizen in the Plainview Addition regarding a parking lot at the new playground location. He explained that they are not putting in a parking lot and that they are just planning on paving the park itself.

He also spoke to Bennie Owens and Jeff Hall about potentially tearing down some condemned houses. Councilman Whiteside asked if we would be taking bids and Mr. Luehmann said yes, and it would be nice to get four to five torn down at a time.

Mr. Luehmann said they met with the Department of Agriculture regarding the progress of the dog kennel, and they were impressed. The structure is about 90% complete.

Luehmann mentioned that he spoke with Hunter Ely from the Mississippi County Historical Society about assistance with a tree in front of the property and that was addressed.

The city manager also spoke with someone interested in purchasing a manufactured home and moving to Charleston. This is on the agenda to be discussed further.

Luehmann explained that he spoke to a concerned citizen about an overgrown property, and he explained the process of tearing down condemned homes and cleaning up the property.

The city manager met with Rich Cochran from Waters Engineering and David Harris to discuss upgrades for the lagoon and possible grants for assistance. Mayor Toon asked if this was to help with the ammonia levels and Harris said yes.

Luehmann mentioned he met with Reggie Young to discuss a donation to assist with new storm sirens, which will also be discussed later on the agenda.

The city manager also spoke to a minister from Grand Avenue SDA church and elders about a community outreach program with the first event being a Community Youth Bike giveaway on June 2nd and it seemed to be a success.

A resident came into city hall to discuss a light pole being knocked down by a city mower. Ameren replaced the pole.

There were no questions regarding the budget update.

There were no questions regarding the bills paid in May equal to or exceeding \$5,000.

There were no questions regarding the monthly public works report, the code enforcement report, or the public safety report.

Old Business: The first item of old business was to discuss an update on the vacant building ordinance. Mayor Toon explained that the council needed to determine the amount of the fee to be set for registering a vacant building. Mayor Toon said he has compared some other cities, and their fees range from \$75-\$150 per year. Toon recommended the fee be set at \$100.00. The city manager asked if this amount would be for both residential and commercial structures and Toon replied, yes. The code enforcement officer would inspect structural damage once a year. There was a draft ordinance in the council packets for review. Councilwoman Polk asked how long the building would have to be unoccupied to be considered vacant. Toon said sixty (60) days. Councilman Oliver asked that because some owners do not live here in town, would there be any type of penalty for those who do not respond to the required registration and fee. Mayor Toon said that if we are unable to contact the owners, we can put a lien on the property.

Mr. Joe Lane from the visitors' section asked for more details to be given and the purpose of the fee. The mayor explained that it is a once-a-year fee for buildings that have been vacant for at least sixty (60) days. This is to simply prevent buildings from being condemned and violating the code.

Talisha Mays also asked if the fee would apply each time a year it is vacant for sixty (60) days and Mayor Toon said no, just once a year and the goal is to have all buildings occupied.

The second item of old business was to discuss storm sirens and funding. The city manager explained that he has been working with the USDA on a \$65,000 grant to secure four (4) towers to help cover the area all the way out to the Flying J/Pilot truck stop area. He has talked to our grant writer, Mitzi Dell in Jefferson City about the paperwork and funding. Mr. Luehmann also explained that the city has to be financially caught up on all audits in order to apply for the grant.

to potentially save the city \$75,000. A public hearing must be held before the application may be submitted and Luehmann recommended scheduling one before the next council meeting. The city manager asked if the council agreed to wait to see if we are able to get the grant money before spending the city's money. Mayor Toon recommended that if we have not received grant funding by storm season of next year, go ahead and proceed with paying our portion.

Councilman Whiteside asked if all three (3) storm sirens went out at the same time. Chief Hearnese explained that one is currently touch and go, but yes, the way they are configured and with the wiring being old and brittle, they all went out at the same time.

Mayor Toon noted that while the sirens are very nice to have, he hopes that they are not the only thing that residents depend on for storm alerts and updates.

New Business: Toon then mentioned that he had two things handed to him prior to the meeting that he wanted to go over. Several items of information were dropped off by Mike Mueller with Day 3 Seed regarding upcoming events. Mayor Toon noted that June 14th is Flag Day and that there will be a Flag Retirement Event held on the property of Knights of Columbus. Mr. Toon then asked Councilman Oliver to explain further as he is the President of the Kiwanis Club. Councilman Oliver explained that this is a holiday where old/tattered flags are properly disposed of with a ceremony in which each flag is burned individually. Oliver said he anticipates that this will be performed quarterly and that they will make this an annual event.

The first item of new business was consideration of **Bill NO. 3953 / Ordinance NO. 3094- An Ordinance to Accept the Proposal from ASA Asphalt to Complete the 2024 Street Overlay Project and the Asphalt at Hequemebourg Park and the James L. Byrd III Memorial Park.** Public Works Director, David Harris, was present to explain what streets were to be overlaid this fiscal year. Harris stated that the plan is to extend Crescent Street from Kingsway Drive by the James L. Byrd III Memorial Park in Plainview and just to overlay the existing asphalt at Hequemebourg Park/Halter Pond. The street overlay project will consist of the following areas:
S 7th Street to E Marshall Street to E Cypress Street
S Olive Street to Vine Street to Gail Street
Gail Street to Finney Street to Wallhausen Street
Paul Street to Lee Street to Wallhausen Street
Warren Street to Lee Street to Wallhausen Street

Harris mentioned that they get a better price when they do several projects at once. Mayor Toon asked how they bill the asphalt and Harris said that we pay by the ton, and it is all according to how thick it is.

A motion was made by Councilman Whiteside to approve Bill NO. 3953 / Ordinance NO. 3094 and to accept the proposal from ASA Asphalt to complete the 2024 street overlay project and the asphalt at Hequemebourg Park and the James L. Byrd III Memorial Park. Councilwoman Polk seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion carried and the ordinance was approved.

The next item of new business was **Bill NO. 3954 / Ordinance NO. 3095- An Ordinance to Accept the Proposal from Banner Fire Equipment to Repair an Existing Fire Truck.** The

city manager explained that we recently paid to rebuild the engine on the same truck. Chief Hearnese said this was to repair the hydraulics on the ladder and that it is a budgeted item, but due to the amount, it requires approval from the council. Councilman Oliver made a motion to approve Bill NO. 3954 / Ordinance NO. 3095 and accept the proposal from Banner Fire Equipment to repair the fire truck. Councilman Whiteside seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion carried and the ordinance was approved.

Next on the agenda was to review the liquor license renewals for the following businesses:

- Casey's General Store #1711; 1202 S Main St
- Casey's General Store #2907; 211 Story St
- Charles' Top Notch Package & Liquor; 606 W Marshall
- Dollar General #3019; 117 Rear N Main St
- Family Dollar #29411; 307 E Marshall

It was also noted that Las Brisas, Smokerz Outlet and Tobacco Station USA have not yet turned in their renewals, but Pilot had overnighted theirs and it would arrive the next day. The remaining businesses technically have until June 30th to renew without a penalty. Chief Hearnese said that there were no reports made on any of the businesses to prevent them from renewing. A motion was made by Councilman Whiteside to approve all the liquor licenses and remaining businesses as they come in. Councilwoman Polk seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion carried and the liquor license renewals were approved.

Next on the agenda was to discuss a possible date change to the July council meeting. Due to the fourth of July holiday, there needs to be more time to prepare for the meeting. Councilman Whiteside asked what the newly proposed date would be, and the City Clerk said the third Tuesday of the month, which would be the 16th. Councilman Whiteside made a motion to move the July 2024 council meeting to July 16th. Councilwoman Polk seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion carried and the date change was accepted.

Visitor Lacosta Ivy was next on the agenda to discuss the existing ordinance against manufactured and mobile homes in Charleston city limits. Ivy addressed the council and explained that modular and manufactured homes are a lot safer/more stable now than they were in the past and that they offer a more affordable option to those looking to move or build in the area. Ivy mentioned that some of the older homes for sale in the area would require a lot of repairs and improvements that would cost a significant amount of money and that these modular and manufactured homes would be a nice option.

Mayor Toon mentioned that the planning and zoning committee has already met to discuss the idea, but suggested that they meet again to discuss establishing certain areas/streets where they would allow such structures.

Councilman Whiteside stated that although there is one manufactured home in town, it was not approved by the council and the planning and zoning committee did not meet to discuss it. A previous city manager approved the structure without permission.

The city manager addressed Ms. Ivy and told her he planned to speak with her after the meeting, but he took a drive to Blodgett and looked at several structures similar to what she is presenting and said that they look very nice, and he agreed that there is definitely a need for affordable

housing in Charleston. Mayor Toon asked that she please be patient with them as they try to find a solution and they would be in touch with her.

Talisha Mays spoke up from the visitors' section and said that she has had some constituents ask about the possibility of tiny homes being allowed in the area. The city manager mentioned that there may be some federal grant funding to help out with establishing a location for similar structures and they are looking into it.

Pastor Dave McLucas was on the agenda to discuss upcoming 4th of July festivities but was unable to attend at the last minute. He dropped off some handouts for the council members to go over the itinerary. "Celebrating God and Country" will be held at AD Simpson Park on July 4th from 4PM-9PM. Events will include a corn hole tournament, kids jump houses, carnival games with prizes, giveaways, and food and refreshments. There will be an opening ceremony that will include the national anthem, the pledge of allegiance, and prayer. Fireworks will conclude the event.

Recognition of Visitors: Cal Coleman, Hudson Byrd, Todd Clodfelter, Joe Lane, Raymond Ivy, Talisha Mays, and Lacosta Ivy were present.

Joe Lane addressed the council and explained that he owns several rental properties and reminded the council that he had attended a meeting last year to discuss the drainage issue around many of his properties. Mr. Lane mentioned that he knew the city had applied for a grant to aid in the funding of repairs and knew that the deadline was fast approaching again and wanted to make sure the city had applied. Public Works Director, David Harris, said that we did automatically reapply whenever we were denied the last time, and everything has been resubmitted.

Councilwoman Polk asked what the application was for as she had just attended the housing authority meeting and they discussed flooded streets as well. Polk asked if there was anything that could be done about that. David Harris said that is just a low area and when there is a flash flood, that unfortunately is just going to happen. It's when it does not drain at all that there is a problem. He said that is just naturally the lowest part of town, so it drains last. Harris also explained that the grant that has been applied for is to help with that. Charleston budgets about \$20,000 a year to work on drainage issues but Harris explained that something this major would take a lot more money so the funding is necessary. Mr. Joe Lane said he understands that it will not be completely resolved as the water has to have somewhere to go but hopes that it can be improved.

Raymond Ivy stood up and addressed the council and asked if he would be allowed his full three minutes to speak without being interrupted. Mr. Ivy began naming the two homeless individuals whose dogs caused permanent damage to his elbow and glasses. Mr. Ivy said that the individuals are violating their probation and that the city attorney, and the judge are not doing their jobs. The homeless individuals told the judge that they moved out of Charleston, but Mr. Ivy saw them on May 9th and May 17th and got a picture of them pushing dogs in a wheelchair. Mr. Ivy named the two officers that were on duty when one of the dogs bit someone and asked where that report was. Mr. Ivy said that the police are doing their job, but the city attorney is not. Councilwoman

Polk asked Mr. Ivy what exactly he was asking the city to do. Mr. Ivy said that the city says they cannot find the dogs. As Mr. Ivy was attempting to answer Councilwoman Polk, the Chief of Police stood up to escort Mr. Ivy out and he left.

Mayor Toon asked if the tranquilizer gun was operational and the city manager said yes, it is.

Cal Coleman spoke up and said that he did not understand why it took so long to get to where we are with the dog situation. Mr. Coleman said he attended a meeting about a year ago about the same exact issue and said this board is supposed to be representing the citizens. Coleman said it seems that the council keeps pushing Mr. Ivy off and he is tired of talking about it.

Talisha Mays addressed the council and said she wanted to know why there is one flock camera within the community when it was stated that there would not be cameras inside the community, only on the exits and entrances to town. Mays said that Councilwoman Goodin had asked Chief Hearnese about the location of the cameras at a meeting last year and that it seemed like he was shooing her off. Mays wanted to know why there was \$5,000 spent to put a camera on Vine Street when the officers do not even have vest cameras or cameras on their vehicles.

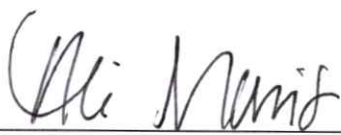
Councilwoman Polk said it was probably because that is where a lot of the crime happens. Chief Hearnese said that it is a high traffic area and that he would like to get a few more this year, along with a mobile one. The city manager said he thinks they are a good thing for the city to have and welcomes them on his street as many places have found missing children and robbers because of the cameras in other locations. Cal Coleman said he was at the same meeting where Councilwoman Goodin asked about the location of the cameras and that they were told they would only be placed at the entrances and exits of the city, but because one is now located inside of the community, it is profiling, and they were told specifically that this would not happen.

Councilwoman Polk asked if they were upset because of where the camera is located or because of what they were told. She said it sounds like they are upset because they feel that they have been lied to.

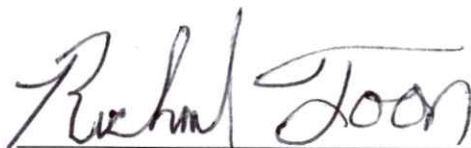
Chief Hearnese said he initially wanted one on Gilmore Street as well but due to the ongoing construction in that area, they had to put one on Story Street instead and it is not really helping due to the Exit 12 construction.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Councilman Whiteside to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Oliver seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The meeting was adjourned.

ATTEST:

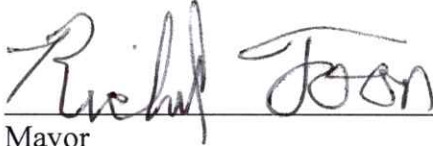


City Clerk



Presiding Officer


City Clerk


Mayor