



CITY OF CHARLESTON

**City Council Meeting
December 12, 2023**

Meeting Minutes

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

Consideration of Prior Meeting Minutes: Mayor Whiteside asked if everyone had reviewed the minutes from the November 14, 2023, meeting. A motion was made by Councilman Toon to approve the previous meeting minutes. Councilman Halter seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The minutes were approved.

Report of City Business: City Manager, Greg Luehmann began by reporting that the city had been awarded the TAP grant to replace sidewalks on Hunter Street. He also mentioned there was an ordinance on the agenda for us to pass in order to continue with the process of receiving the funds.

Luehmann then explained that he met with Chief Hearnese and Lill McKinney from the Chamber of Commerce in November to discuss extending the route of the Christmas parade. He thanked Chief Hearnese for allowing them to do so and said it was a great parade with a positive turnout.

The city manager said he and Chief Hearnese attended the final meeting with the Mississippi County Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee. The city manager asked Hearnese if there was any update on the data collection they were waiting on. Hearnese said not yet.

Luehmann then explained that he, David Harris, Chief Hearnese, and the Animal Control Officer, Kelly Brown met with architect Phillip Smith to discuss bids and plans for a new dog kennel. It was determined that pouring concrete would be cheaper than laying brick. David Harris, Director of Public Works, has agreed to be the contractor on the project, which would save the city a lot of money. The city manager explained that he would like to move forward with this project so that concrete may be poured soon. Councilman Halter asked if funds for the project could be taken out of the Capital Improvements Fund. The city manager said he felt that they could be, as it is technically a police department expense. Councilman Toon asked if anyone had looked into USDA grants. Mr. Luehmann explained that if they tried to go with grants on this project, it would double the cost and we would have to pay for the architect to do a full set of

plans, which alone would cost \$18,000. Luehmann explained he felt that the project could be completed for approximately \$150,000.

Councilwoman Goodin asked if the plans were to keep it at 16 kennels or if they were going to lessen that. Mr. Luehmann explained that if we do the project ourselves, we can plan as we go and can increase the amount as needed. There were ten dogs in the kennel when it was recently inspected. All the council members agreed for the city manager to move forward with the dog kennel project.

The city manager mentioned that he met with Reggie Young and Nelson Byrd for the presentation of the Byrd Endowment Fund for the benefit of the city and said it is very nice to have.

Mr. Luehmann then explained that he and Chief Hearnese were working on a grant to hopefully be able to purchase communication equipment/radios.

Councilman Halter asked if there was any update on where they stood on the equipment for the police vehicles. Chief Hearnese responded that the black Tahoe was completed and just needed to be picked up.

Mr. Luehmann mentioned that a citizen stopped in the office to ask if the city would fix some potholes by a stop sign at Oliver and Vine Street. Mr. Luehmann went with David Harris to look at the issue and it was resolved by the Public Works Department that afternoon.

One of the fire engines is currently being worked on at Heavy D. Equipment. The decision was made to rebuild the engine.

The city manager explained that he would be meeting with David Hickman the following day to further discuss the health insurance rates for all city employees. We plan on staying with the same plan and will still be under budget. None of the employees will see an increase in their portion.

To wrap up his report, Mr. Luehmann mentioned that he met with a company to discuss replacement of the plants in front of City Hall. Mike Mueller is supposed to stop by the office tomorrow to also discuss options for the plants.

Old Business: Mayor Whiteside moved onto the four items on the agenda of old business. There are two new memorandums of understanding that have been drafted. One is between the City of Charleston and CHARM. The other is between the City of Charleston and the Chamber of Commerce. Both documents include terms that the organizations will furnish the city with detailed and comprehensive accounting of all funds received from the City during the preceding fiscal year. After looking them over, Councilman Halter asked if this meant that the city feels comfortable releasing the funds being held from the hotel/motel tax to the Chamber. Mr. Luehmann said yes, we would like to distribute them.

Councilman Halter made a motion to approve both the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Charleston, Missouri and Charleston Revitalization Movement (CHARM), and the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Charleston, Missouri and Charleston

Chamber of Commerce. Councilwoman Goodin seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The MOUs were approved.

Next, was to review the Memorandum of Understanding of Independent Contracting Agreement for Municipal Court Clerk Services between the City of Charleston and the City of East Prairie and the memorandum of understanding between the City of Charleston and the City of Bertrand for the same service. City Attorney, Tabatha Graham explained that these are the exact same terms and conditions as the previous year. We simply need to renew for the January 1, 2024-December 31, 2024, year. Councilman Halter made a motion to approve both the Memorandum of Understanding of Independent Contracting Agreement for Municipal Court Clerk Services between the City of Charleston and the City of East Prairie, and the Memorandum of Understanding of Independent Contracting Agreement for Municipal Court Clerk Services between the City of Charleston and the City of Bertrand. Councilman Dugan seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion carried and the MOUs were approved.

Before moving forward, the city manager wanted to make sure no one had any questions regarding the budget report. Councilman Halter asked if we had noticed a decrease in diesel fuel tax revenue due to the work being done on the overpass. Mr. Luehmann said there definitely has been a decrease.

Mr. Luehmann directed attention to the report of bills paid in the month of November in excess of \$5,000. He pointed out that city funds were spent on the water plant project after grant funds ran out. Mr. Luehmann explained that our water plant is in really good shape right now.

Mayor Whiteside referred to the Code Enforcement Officer report and wanted to note that he feels that he is doing an excellent job.

Councilman Halter asked what the status was on the Flock license plate reader technology. Chief Hearnese said that Ameren rejected placement on two of their poles and MODOT has not approved any of their poles for use yet.

New Business: Mayor Whiteside moved onto **Bill NO. 3947 / Ordinance NO. 3088- An Ordinance Authorizing the City Manager to sign on behalf of the City of Charleston and to execute an agreement between the City of Charleston and The Missouri Highway Transportation Commission (MHTC) in regard to the Transportation Enhancement Funds for the project to replace and upgrade existing sidewalks to ADA standards along Hunter Street.**

Councilman Halter noted that this was necessary in order to receive the funding from the TAP grant as discussed earlier in the meeting. Councilman Halter then made a motion to approve Bill NO. 3947/Ordinance NO. 3088. Councilwoman Goodin seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion carried and the ordinance was approved.

The next item on the agenda was to discuss a potential ordinance to create a process for certain residential and commercial structures. Mr. Luehmann said he would defer to Councilman Toon on this subject. Councilman Toon explained that this example ordinance would apply to any

vacant building in town. Once vacant, the owner would have to fill out an application with the city and pay \$50 for the first year. The city could adjust the price going forward, but the purpose would be to keep people from owning buildings/houses and just letting them sit and decay. Toon explained that this is just an example, and we could fine tune it to the city's needs. Toon said he believed this would help keep people from owning a building and using it for storage and/or letting it sit empty and decay. Councilman Halter noted that this could be a big asset to the code enforcement officer. Mr. Luehmann mentioned that the building would have to meet certain criteria in order for this to be enforced-we obviously would not do this if the building is in great shape. Councilman Toon agreed and said this example was just for the council to look at and consider. Councilman Halter then asked the city attorney if she would have something similar drawn up for the city. She agreed to do so. All the council agreed this could be a valuable tool to the city.

Next on the agenda was to discuss dog kennel requirements/inspection. A copy of an inspection performed by the Missouri Department of Agriculture Division of Animal Health was included in the council packets. There were some deficiencies noted in the report. Councilman Toon asked if we could be fined on these issues. Mr. Luehmann said yes, if we did not have a plan in place to fix the problems, but we do.

The last item on the agenda under new business was to discuss Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 353-Tax Abatement. Councilman Toon explained that this was mentioned during the community meeting last week. Currently the tax rates are set to where a new business owner pays taxes the year after purchase, based on assessed value. This particular tax abatement would allow the business owner to lock in the tax rate that they paid when they purchased the building, for ten (10) years. This would allow the business to have time to grow and expand before having to automatically pay a higher rate each year. The city has the authority to pass this, and it would lock the rates in with the county also. Everyone agreed this would be a great tool for the city and for the benefit of local businesses. The city attorney and Kenny Hulshof agreed to work together in order to draft an ordinance for the council to consider, hopefully by the next meeting.

Recognition of Visitors: Sherry Austin, Tiffany Shankle, Sheila Shankle, Quenita Jenae Goodin, Quender Jackson, Kenny Hulshof, Cedrica Polk, Talisha Mays, Pam Jones, and Steven Kuykendall with the Charleston Department of Public Safety were present.

To begin, the City Manager noted that Talisha Mays had requested to be on the agenda and had submitted questions prior to the meeting. He asked if it would be okay for him to read her questions and answer them. Mays said yes.

Mr. Luehmann read the first question: 1. "Will the new mayor uphold my conversation of placement on the boards I requested to be on in July? If so can I have a start date if not can u explain to by not?"

The city manager explained to Mays that the City Clerk gave her a copy of the boards that same night of the meeting in July, as well as the same copy recently and all of the names of those on the boards have expiration dates beside them and there are no openings at this time.

2. "When opening up a business what's the order the the city takes in order for the business too

get there license and what input dose the city lawyer input required in getting the business license? And who has the say so about what type of new business that can be open in the city of Charleston.”

The city manager explained that Mays was referred to the business license ordinance when she was given the responses to her sunshine law request regarding this same question. The ordinances are online for anyone to view. Mays said she wanted to know what the city attorney has to do with the process. Luehmann said it is always wise to ask the city attorney for advice on these issues.

3. “Do we have a chairman pro? If so who? How many meeting can a city council miss before the board votes them out?”

Mr. Luehmann responded that the Chairman Pro Tem is currently Phil Halter, and he was voted into that position during the October 10, 2023, meeting. This information along with the previous mayors and chairman pro tem positions was also given to Mays in her records request. As far as how many meetings a council member can miss before being voted out- that information is also in the public ordinances available online.

4. “How many signatures are needed in order to make Lincoln Park a city park again?”

The city manager explained that the city does not own that property and that this would be a question for the Housing Authority as they own the property. Mr. Luehmann also explained that the city currently owns and maintains eight (8) parks.

5. “Why don’t the city discuss what are civil service is doing and what we are spending?”

Mr. Luehmann said assuming that civil service was referring to the police department, the reports are in the local newspaper each week and we provided her with a copy of the budget she requested in her records request. The budget is also discussed at each council meeting.

6. “What credentials are needed by our code enforcement to say he’s or she is qualified to give out citations?”

Mr. Luehmann explained that Charleston is a third-class city, which means we do not have to have credential requirements for a code enforcement official.

7. “With the money that was donated to the city of Charleston when will the city have access to utilize it? And can there be a consideration to use it for the youth to keep the parks in the city clean can that be an option?”

The city manager said she had previously asked Mr. Reggie Young during the meeting when it was announced what the funds would be/could be used for and he advised her that this would be used for the maintenance of the parks and future improvements.

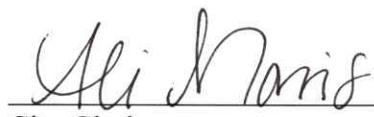
Sherry Austin spoke up on behalf of CHARM and wanted to thank the council members for their participation in the meetings that were held for the community the previous week. Austin named off a few “low budget” ideas for improvements that could possibly be made around town to make it more colorful and welcoming, including thermo crosswalks.

Tiffany Shankle commented that they have submitted grant requests through T. Mobile hometown grants each quarter and have yet to receive anything as of yet, but that it is always worth a try. She said maybe if they were to collaborate with consultants, they would be more likely to be awarded something.

No one else had any questions or comments.

Adjourn: Councilman Halter made a motion to adjourn the regular session meeting and go into closed session to discuss personnel. Councilman Toon seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The regular session was adjourned.

ATTEST:


City Clerk


Presiding Officer


City Clerk


Mayor