

March 18, 2025

Minutes of the regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Clinton, Illinois in session in the Council Chambers of City Hall and electronically, Tuesday, March 18, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. Commissioner Wise, presiding. On roll call, Commissioners Buchanan and Ballenger were present.

Commissioner Wise announced the discussion regarding solar would begin after all business was taken care of.

Written motion was made by Commissioner Ballenger and seconded by Commissioner Buchanan that the minutes of the regular meeting of March 4, 2025 be approved as submitted. On roll call vote, Commissioners Wise, Ballenger and Buchanan voted "Yes."

The bills and payroll were read.

Written motion was made by Commissioner Buchanan and seconded by Commissioner Ballenger that the bills and payroll be allowed as read and the Clerk be instructed to issue warrants on the Treasurer for the several amounts. On roll call vote, Commissioners Ballenger, Buchanan and Wise voted "Yes."

## **PETITIONS**

### **REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

Written motion was made by Commissioner Ballenger and seconded by Commissioner Buchanan to reappoint Clint Lichtenwalter to the Fire Pension Board for a 2 year term. On roll call vote, Commissioners Buchanan, Wise and Ballenger voted "Yes."

Written motion was made by Commissioner Ballenger and seconded by Commissioner Buchanan to reappoint Brandon Robinson to the Police Pension Board with a 2 year term. On roll call vote, Commissioners Wise, Ballenger and Buchanan voted "Yes."

Written motion was made by Commissioner Ballenger and seconded by Commissioner Buchanan to appoint Mike Bennett to the Fire & Police Commission for the term of 3 years. On roll call vote, Commissioners Ballenger, Buchanan and Wise voted "Yes."

### **REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF STREETS & PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS**

Commissioner Buchanan reminded that brush pickup started back up this month, leaves are only picked up by the vac in the fall and need to be in bags. Commissioner Buchanan said the state has contacted us about putting a sidewalk above the viaduct, with us taking

responsibility. Buchanan stated there are concerns with safety, liability, and maintenance that will be brought forth to the state.

#### **REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC PROPERTY**

Commissioner Wise said he brought people down for a tour of the water plant. It gives a look at the upgrades that will be happening. At the end of the month there will be a lime upgrade, citizens will see a change in the water, there should be no concerns with the water during this time.

#### **REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY**

Commissioner Ballenger mentioned the installation and surfacing for approval for Kiwanis Park in tonight's meeting.

#### **REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTS & FINANCES**

Department of Accounts & Finances had no report.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Written motion was made by Commissioner Ballenger and seconded by Commissioner Buchanan to approve 321 E Bissel demolition bid with Dial Excavating for the amount of \$8,500.00. On roll call vote, Commissioners Buchanan, Wise and Ballenger voted "Yes."

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Written motion was made by Commissioner Ballenger and seconded by Commissioner Buchanan to approve Kiwanis Park surfacing with Cunningham Recreation in the amount of \$134,541.25. On roll call vote, Commissioners Wise, Ballenger and Buchanan voted "Yes."

Written motion was made by Commissioner Ballenger and seconded by Commissioner Buchanan to approve Kiwanis Park installation with Cunningham Recreation in the amount of \$127,507.00. On roll call vote, Commissioners Ballenger, Buchanan and Wise voted "Yes."

On File – Letter of Intent IDOT – Job C-95-013-19

On File – Res-Q-Jack Stabilization and Lifting System/Fire Department – AEC - \$16,005.00

On File – Façade Grant – Brendan & Shelby Koren 212 & 214 E Main Street

On File - Encore Developmental Services Contract Proposal - 2025 Season \$58,100.00/2026 Season \$59,510.00

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Commissioner Wise announced at this point in the meeting, solar is up for discussion everyone is welcome to speak starting with the first row.

Kathy Evans, came forth with concerns as she has adjacent farmland between her home and the solar farm. If the farm was to be approved, would her land be protected? She worries about the damage from the crops and her home trespassing and looks to protect herself. Evans asked about fencing and stated her farm ground was purchased to be able to control what goes in around them. Ballenger asked Zachary Farkes if he could speak about the fencing, Farkes said he provided the council with a FAQ letter, referring to her concerns. Fences are required by the national electric code with a variety of options, to keep the solar array protected and people out as it is a power plant. Regarding protecting the growth of neighboring farm properties, Illinois Department of Agriculture has an agreement for design, construction and decommissioning to ensure protection of the neighboring properties. Farkes assured nothing is done on a third-party property.

Linda Sturgeon-Coleman came forth stating she likes progression, however, has concerns regarding solar development parts are not good for our bodies and wildlife, Sturgeon-Coleman asked if all of the companies have the same rules, who do they employ, where do all of the parts come from, is any of it US made or is it hidden in a company of companies? She has concerns as a great grandmother and wants our community to be safe. Sturgeon-Coleman asked if the energy that is to be made, will help us at all or go to Chicago? Farkes responded saying they are bound by national electric code, City of Clinton requirements for projects. Ballenger asked about the makeup of the company, Farkes said it's different for each company. Permits and designs stay with the land. Sturgeon-Coleman asked about the project scale, Farkes said projects range around 15 million dollars expanding in utility, labor which is local, and components. The modules, due to policy of the federal administration changes, modules have been bought domestically and internationally. Rewild has no overseas investment. Regarding protections on storms, Farkes referred to the AIMA agreement. Will the power be local or go elsewhere, Rewild is considering it a community solar project, where it is connected and used locally. The power is sold to residential or municipal groups. It is not exported in mass. The intent is for electricity to be consumed locally. Brant Thomas from PureSky said his company is out of Denver, with investment in New York and Australia. Sturgeon-Coleman thanked everyone for their time. Evans asked if a tornado came through and a solar panel damaged her home who would be liable. Farkes said the projects hold multi-million-dollar insurance policies.

Michelle Fortune came forth stating she does not live in city limits, but lives in the country facing wind farms. Fortunes concerns are about the growth of the community looking at the map, asking the council if they have thought about this. She's worried about children getting over the fences. Ballenger said they have talked about the solar farms making us landlocked. Fortune asked how much money the town, county, school district would receive? Farkes said financially there are two specific items, increased tax revenue in annexation. Community benefit agreements bring money for development

and funding development which is usually a low six figure number. Fortune asked if it was a one-time payment, Farkes said it could be structured as recurring. All the information is presented in the Special Use application for the project. Fortune asked the council if the dollar amount was worth all of this. Property value concern was brought up as well, Fortune stated the property value has gone down for homes in the wind farm area. Fortune thanked council for their time.

Kelley Harvey came before the council, asking about job opportunities for our community. Farkes said he answered that before, in the labor aspect. Harvey asked about the timeframe for a solar set up. Farkes said from start to finish, shovel to finish is six months. Harvey asked who the landowners for the proposed properties are. Council answered Finrock's, City of Clinton, Michael Wilford and CH Moore Estate. Kelley asked the council if the City is considering. The council said a company came to Clint about a project. Wise said he doesn't know how much Clinton will grow and we have developed areas for growth. To the north and east he doesn't foresee growth unless we build infrastructure. Ballenger said he's looking at in the aspect of aesthetics for Clinton, this would knock out potential for 20 years. Harvey questioned with the new subdivision and Kwik Wall coming asked at what point do we max out the electrical grid and asked what the capacity was. Farkes said it goes on both sides of the coin and there is no competition, there is competition only among solar projects as there is only enough room for each. Harvey asked how much we could put on the grid for solar, Farkes said he wasn't sure as he couldn't see the map. Farkes said the substation that he has looked at has a transformer that could handle around four solar projects. Ameren would tell us when the capacity has been reached. Harvey asked what has been done for environmental impacts, Farkes pointed towards the AIMA agreement. In the special use this would be explained for the projects. Ballenger asked what the vegetation control process was, Farkes said it is in their plans for frequency etc. Ballenger asked for clarification if it was all done by mowing, Farkes said there is no chemicals. Livestock was brought into question, Rewild does not use livestock for their company. Thomas said in their operating projects they do have sheep grazing and have had great results. Harvey asked the council what the revenue for their property would be. Tony Harris said the city received a letter asking for discussion, nothing has been proposed.

Jim Lopresto came before council, he lives north of a proposed project. Lopresto has been in power generation for 20 years. Lopresto expressed concerns about his property as he could potentially be surrounded by annexed property. Lopresto asked if he could be forced to annex, Hoblit stated no. Lopresto shared concerns with insurance issues with storm damage. Lopresto asked if the United States administration dries up the subsidies for solar projects, what would it mean for a project incomplete etc. Lopresto asked if these would be voted on before the Mayor election. Hoblit said hearings for pre-annexation agreements would need to take place, implying it wouldn't be an overnight process. Wise asked Farkes and Thomas to answer the module issues. Farkes said the type of modules Rewild will be using is silicon, the only heavy metals would be from the solder, again said these could be conditions for the developer. Generally, these panels do not leak heavy metals or contaminate soil. Ballenger said these projects would go one way or the other. Farkes said they can be applied for at the County or City level as he

was looking for direction of jurisdiction. Ballenger asked if they could be stopped, Farkes referred to the attorney. Farkes said the standard agricultural impact agreement is a commitment to spell out the procedures. Lopresto thanked council for his time.

Seth Redington came before council, he asked what work has been done with the drainage district. The council said none yet. Redington referred to a past meeting he asked about mounting. Redington expressed concerns with tiling and pilings. Redington asked if the council knew what is done with tiling, council said they haven't gotten that far yet. Redington expressed concern with disruption and ground water. Thomas said they do drain tile surveys that are not always 100% accurate. He said if they find something they hit, they do replace it.

Robert Kreidler came before council, he thanked Commissioner Wise and Kyle for taking him through the plant. Kreidler asked how much discussion there has been between them and the companies. Buchanan said not much. Harris said he has had some discussions with county officials. Kreidler asked how much was coming from subsidies with a 15-million-dollar tag that was mentioned before. Farkes said at the federal level, an accelerated depreciation schedule and a 30% tax credit. There is no cash flow to the project. Farkes said it takes 6-7 years to recoup for the cost of construction. At the state level they are selling electricity. Kreidler said introducing large panels into the community, is any of this hazardous if touched. Farkes said none of the panels are hazardous and made of silicon as discussed earlier. The hazardous part is the electrical portion. Kreidler asked what would happen if fire is an issue. Farkes said fire safety is addressed in the letter presented to council. Lopresto said the transformers are an issue, you don't put them out, you let them burn as they burn for hours. Ballenger said it's just like electric car batteries. Ballenger stated we have acquired a foam trailer. Kreidler feels this is a stab in the back to the power plant as they have pumped a lot of money into our community. Kreidler says the state has taken away power for communities for projects like this, and makes sure the ordinances are iron clad. Kreidler asked how many states have reached decommissioning. Farkes said the fact the bonds are still issued to their companies, that they are delivering on their projects with no reason for default on the project, therefore, reason for the bond if the company dissolves. Ballenger says at the end of the 20 years, what is to say they can't continue on with another 20 years. Farkes said nothing.

Buck Carter came before council, he stated he is not here on behalf of the county board. Carter said they have redone the solar ordinance several times through the years as changes are constant. Carter said the city has the mile and a half jurisdiction in zoning, the county has no say even with the land in the county as the city protection. Carter says they need to keep the land available. These are not farms, they are industry, power producing industry. Carter says you can see what it does to the community when you put it in your neighborhood. He believes it's not what the people of the City of Clinton want, or council as the city fathers want and should keep options open. Carter asks them to do their due diligence and look hard at this and remember what their responsibilities to the citizens are. Ballenger thanked Carter for his comment on the mile and half. Carter said

the state has written a lot of rules the county has to abide by, not the city. Carter thanked the council.

Kelli Schott came before the council and thanked them for holding this meeting and hearing concerns. Schott said she works with attorneys and has spoken with one regarding landowner leases. HB4412 was brought up, she said they can't say no even with ordinances in place, we must abide by the state's ordinances. Schott said her life will be devastated if this happens, she will be in the middle of these farms. She is a single mom and fought for 15 years, her property will be destroyed. Schott is a virtual bookkeeper; she thinks this will affect her and her vestibular issue. Schott asked who will make her whole, it will destroy her financially. She bought the house for peace and quiet. Schott said a bill has been filed to amend the setbacks, from the front of your home setback, the fence will be her only view. Schott said she would be happy to provide the summary of HB4412 to the council. Schott said she agrees with the other speakers tonight. Schott thanked the council.

Kim Johns came before council, like Kelli they are property owners in the middle of a proposed solar farm. Johns agreed with everything everyone had said. Johns wants to talk about the property owners whose property is affected by the solar farms. Johns asked what will happen to property values, who would want to buy these properties? She agreed they are eyesores. Johns asked the council why we need industrial solar farm, we have the power plant and windmills and believes sometimes you can have too much of a good thing, and this is too much. Johns says this would be taking farmland out of production. Johns believes we need to keep productive farmland productive. She believes the landowners will profit greatly from the rental amounts. They are profiting from something harmful. Johns wished Finfrock's luck and questioned if her personal insurance would be affected. Johns believes this will be a detriment to the growth of the town. Johns thanked the council for their time.

Brad Barnes spoke via zoom before council, he is not in favor of building solar within a mile and half of Clinton. Barnes asked Farkes to confirm an accounting question. Barnes said council needs to understand green energy gets 4.5 million dollars and accelerated depreciation. Barnes asked the council to not rush into this, we do not need energy, and nuclear power is making a comeback. Barnes asserted if a hailstorm wiped out the integrity of the farm, would they get the investment tax credit if they reconfigure. Barnes thanked the council for their time.

Mike Creager came before council on behalf of Kelli Schott and Jesse Johns. Creager said HB4412 there is no way for devaluation of property. Creager asked Farkes if he knew the amount offered to the Finfrock's, that they wanted to put the solar farm on the Finfrock farm in front of and behind Schott, Johns and Spargrove's. Creager asked why Farkes didn't go to the neighbors asking for input. Farkes said because they haven't reached that stage and there are many steps to the project. Creager asked why they can't anyone in the footprint be made an offer, Farkes said they haven't gotten to that point. Creager said inverters can be annoying over 40db, Farkes said they can make noise. Creager asked if they can be placed where the noise level would be below 40db. Farkes

said absolutely. Creager asked about the clicking of the panels when moving. Farkes said a sound study is to be considered. Farkes said it is hard to discuss specific projects because they haven't gotten that far into planning. There is a lot to be considered and understands the frustration with not having answers. Farkes is trying to figure out the baseline of rules to follow, whether it be Clinton of the County of DeWitt and is still waiting for that answer. Farkes said the questions are project specific, and he isn't at that point. Creager thanks Farkes.

Jessica Allhands asked if there is potential for money to be offered to surrounding property owners. Farkes said there is a possibility for all stakeholders. Lopresto expressed concern that with their questions, there won't be answers until after the fact. Farkes said all of the questions will be asked in the permitting portion. Hoblit stated the timeline of annexation will come first then special use permit hearings. Farkes said in the special use permit application there will be supporting material, siting work, plan set. All available before approval of the application. Sturgeon-Coleman asked about noise, Farkes said sound studies are done in the area of the noise generated and neighboring properties.

Bill Monson asked if the project comes before planning commission before the council. Hoblit stated it depends on the jurisdiction and rule set. Harvey asked for confirmation that if the city says no the county can't do it, Carter said the county had no authority.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to come before the Council, a motion was made by Commissioner Ballenger and seconded by Commissioner Buchanan to adjourn the meeting. On roll call vote, Commissioners Buchanan, Wise and Ballenger voted "Yes."

Respectfully Submitted,

Kamren Wilford  
City Clerk