

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
COMMON COUNCIL & RENSSELAER UTILITY BOARD
September 9, 2024**

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer and Rensselaer Utility Board met on September 9, 2024 in regular session in Council Chambers of City Hall. Mayor Jeffrey S. Phillips called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by an invocation offered by Doug Harris and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Answering roll call were: Mayor Jeff Phillips, Clerk-Treasurer Shelby Keys, Council Members Russ Overton, Kevin Arnold, Noelle Weishaar, Jeff Rayburn, Ernest Watson, Jr; City Attorney Todd Sammons, Building Commissioner Josh Davis, Cemetery Caretaker Joe Effinger, Fire Chief Kenny Haun, Police Chief Matt Anderson, Utility Office Manager Heather Smart, Lead Line Foreman Garrett Welker, Park Supt Heather Hall, Street/Water/Sewer/Sanitation Supt. Bryce Black, Project Coordinator Jerry Lockridge, and Gas Supt. Carol Lockridge.

Also in attendance were: Bob Schenk with Rensselaer Adventures, Eric Walsh and Nicole Grzybowski with Baker Tilly, Andrew Robarge with Commonwealth Engineers, Cody Heldak, Caleb DeJong, Jeff Augustine, Dwayne Nagle, Bill Manis, and Harley Tomlinson with the Rensselaer Republican.

The minutes of the August 26, 2024 regular council meeting were presented. There was a motion by Rayburn, second by Weishaar, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Citizen Comments and Petitions: None.

Ordinance 17-2024, Discontinuation of Services: Sammons said after the first reading a few minor changes were added for clarification. Any returned payment made for a payment agreement will be cause for immediate disconnection. The delinquency fees were clarified as a \$25.00 delinquency fee and a \$75.00 reconnect fee after-hours. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Watson, to approve the ordinance. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 21-2024, Gas Tracker: C. Lockridge stated the gas tracker reflects no change from the prior months billing. There was a motion by Rayburn, second by Overton, to approve the resolution. The motion passed unanimously.

Knights of Columbus Blue Light Proclamation: The Blue Light Program was recognized with a Mayoral Proclamation.

Scott Street Railroad Crossing: Phillips' said with council's approval, he would like to start the process by holding a public hearing to begin taking the proper steps of closing a crossing. He would like to move forward and see what the public comments are. Weishaar said her hesitation is once it's closed, it won't reopen. Arnold said his concern is also that it is permanent, but he wants to see what the public thinks. There was a motion by Watson, second by Rayburn, to move forward with the Scott Street Railroad Crossing and hold a public hearing on the topic. The motion passed unanimously.

State Revolving Fund (SRF) Sewage Costs: Andrew Robarge with Commonwealth Engineers explained the sewer project that is being mandated by IDEM through a long-term control plan that was agreed upon by prior administration. He said this is the second year going to SRF for financing, as last year was unsuccessful. This year Rensselaer is being offer a max of \$20,000,000.00 at 0% interest with repayment over the course of 21 years. This project would be a new wastewater treatment plant, lining of the sewer on Melville Street, and upsizing the interceptors along Milroy Avenue. Eric Walsh with Baker Tilly presented financial information. They are proposing a three-phase rate increase over the next few years. Discussion was had. There was a motion by Watson, second by Rayburn, to approve moving forward with the project. The motion passed unanimously.

Indiana Finance Authority (IFA) Inventory Funding Program: Robarge said the IFA has an emerging containment program aimed at PFAS, a chemical with new EPA regulations. Rensselaer has been asked to participate in the program, at no cost to the City. Additional testing will be conducted to see if the emerging contaminant is present in the raw water & finished water leaving the treatment plant. If tests continue to show no PFAS, then testing will conclude. If testing is done and PFAS are present, remediation will be needed. Weishaar asked if the chemical is detected, how long do we have to remediate and what are the costs associated. Robarge said it's too early on in the program for answers to those questions. There was a motion by Watson, second by Weishaar, to allow Black to sign the scope of work agreement. The motion passed unanimously.

Camera System: Phillips presented a \$1,945.00 quote from Soniclear for an updated camera system that will record meetings. There was a motion by Rayburn, second by Overton, to approve the purchase. The motion passed unanimously.

2025 Insurance/Raise: Weishaar said the salary committee met and are recommending HDHP Plan 7 for Health Insurance, Plan 1 for Dental, Plan 1 for Vision, Plan 1 for Basic Life, Plan 1 for Short-Term Disability, and to increase the HSA contribution to \$2,000.00. The committee is suggesting a 2% increase for all full and part-time employees and a 5% increase for elected officials. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Watson, to approve all of the recommendations. The motion passed unanimously.

Trick-Or-Treating: Phillips suggested hours for Trick-Or-Treating to be on Wednesday, October 31st from 5-8 PM. There was a motion by Arnold, second by Overton, to approve the request. The motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Comments:

Phillips said Veteran's Day falls on a scheduled Council Meeting. He would like to move the November 11th meeting to November 12th. There was a motion by Overton, second by Rayburn, to approve the meeting date change. The motion passed unanimously.

Keys said a public hearing will be held for the budget on September 23rd and the budget ordinance will be adopted on October 14th.

Watson had nothing.

Weishaar had nothing.

Rayburn had nothing.

Arnold said city-wide spending needs to be tightened.

Overton had nothing.

Claims Approval: The claims were presented to council for approval. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Arnold, to approve the claims. The motion passed unanimously.

Superintendents Reports:

Police Dept: Anderson said there were no issues during Little Cousin Jasper, but they made quite a few traffic stops.

Law Dept: Sammons had nothing.

Utility Office: Smart had nothing.

Building Dept: Davis said he is working with the Street Dept. and Police Dept. to get a date scheduled to clean-up the property on Front St. The Laserfiche migration is complete. There is a Plan Commission meeting on the 19th. The public hearing for the railroad crossing closing will be October 14th.

Fire Dept: Haun had nothing.

Electric Dept: Welker had nothing.

Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewage: Black said the water tower on Drexel is being cleaned tomorrow.

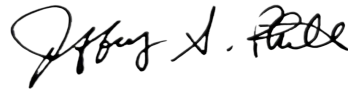
Project Coordinator: J. Lockridge had nothing.

Gas Dept: C. Lockridge had nothing.

Cemetery Dept: Effinger said the Cemetery Walk is on September 21st.

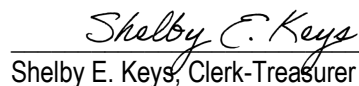
Park Dept: Hall said she is working on getting everything cleaned up from Little Cousin Jasper.

There being nothing more to come before council, there was a motion by Rayburn, second by Weishaar, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.



Jeffrey S. Phillips, Mayor

Attest:


Shelby E. Keys, Clerk-Treasurer