

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

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer and Rensselaer Utility Board met on December 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 Kenin Smith 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, Lead Line Foreman Garrett Welker, Park Supt Heather Hall, Street/Water/Sewer/Sanitation Supt. Bryce Black and Gas Supt. Carol Lockridge. Utility Office Manager Heather Smart was absent.

Also, in attendance were: Bob Schenk with Rensselaer Adventures, Cole Kistler with Rieth & Riley, Eric Walsh, Josh Eldridge, Todd Wilson, Angie Haun, Caleb DeJong, Bill Manis, Avery Walker, Shawn Strange with First Group Engineers, Brett Schwab with the Presidio Group, Camden Chapman with Milestone Contractors, Harley Tomlinson with the Rensselaer Republican and Stace Pickering.

The minutes of the November 25, 2024 regular council meeting were presented. There was a motion by Rayburn, second by Watson, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**Citizen Comments and Petitions:** Kenin Smith thanked Black and the Street Department for assisting with the potholes near his building.

**Public Hearing to Discuss Sewer Rate Increase:** There was a motion by Watson, second by Rayburn, to close the regular meeting. The motion passed unanimously. There was a motion by Overton, second by Watson, to open the public hearing. The motion passed unanimously. Eric Walsh with Baker Tilly said there have been several presentations on the sewer rates already. The City started projects in 2016 under the Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP), which must be completed by 2028. Phase IIB and III will complete the LTCP and satisfy IDEM requirements. The unfunded mandate required \$40 million in projects to be completed. The City received grants and favorable financing every step of the way.

Today in Rensselaer, the average sewer rate is \$57 per month, which is based off a 4,000 gal/month user. January 1, 2025 rates will increase for the average sewer customer 30% or \$17/month, in 2026 there will be a 23% increase or \$17/month and in 2027 another 13% increase or \$12/month.

Bill Manis stated that 50% of school children are at poverty level and suggested that instead of increasing rates over three years, the rate increase should be spread over several more years. Walsh said that three years is the longest because of the debt repayment, with the first bond payment being due in 2026. The State wants the final rates in place prior to the first bond payment. Manis asked about the questionnaire that was sent in the mail. Black said that is in regards to lead lines and the city is self-performing those at not cost to the customer.

There was a motion by Watson, second by Rayburn, to close the public hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

**Public Hearing to Petition to Vacate Prairie Street and Unnamed Road:** There was a motion made by Watson, second by Overton, to open public hearing to vacate Prairie Street and Unnamed Road. The motion passed unanimously. Davis gave description of the area that Petitioner Schwab is requesting be vacated. The petitioner said that Weston Street is busy and the four loading docks on that street are heavily used. With the petition to vacate, it will allow the whole area to flow more efficiently. Derek Schultz, adjacent property owner, met with Building Commissioner Davis and Attorney Walker to voice his objections; he owns the property and heavily uses the existing Prairie Street. If vacated, he wants it split evenly and does not want a fence installed. Davis stated it is unclear how Schultz came to own the abutting property that lies on a portion of Unnamed Road. The county has him listed as the owner of the property since 2010 even though there are no records of it being vacated by the city. There was a motion by Overton, second by Rayburn, to close the public hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

**2024 Community Crossing Matching Grant (CCMG) Bid Opening:** Eldridge read from the following bid packages that were received:

Bid #1 – Milestone Contractors North, Inc.  
1700 E Main Street, Griffith, IN 46319  
Bid \$1,169,000.00

Bid #2 – Town & Country Paving  
6049 Work Street, DeMotte, IN 46310  
Bid \$1,077,498.00

Eldridge and First Group Engineers took the bids to review.

**Ordinance 27-2024; Sewer Rate Increase:** This is the second reading of Ordinance 27-2024. There was a motion made by Weishaar, second by Watson to approve. The motion passed unanimously.

**Ordinance 28-2024; Collecting and Writing off Debt Owed to the City of Rensselaer Municipal Utilities:** Sammons said Ordinance 01-2019 pertaining to this subject needed revisions. This ordinance covers only debt owed to a utility. The TRECS Program is used to collect debts from tax refunds. Arnold asked who the designated appeals court was. Sammons said that it still needs set up. There was a motion by Watson, second by Rayburn, to suspend the rules and waive the second reading. The motion passed unanimously. There was a motion by Rayburn, second by Watson, to approve the ordinance. The motion passed unanimously.

**Resolution 31-2024; Transfer of Funds:** Keys read a transfer of funds within the General Fund for \$118,231.07, MVH Fund for \$3,200.00, LR&S Fund for \$2,246.30, and PS-LIT Fund for \$9,500.00. There was a motion made by Weishaar, second by Arnold, to approve the resolution. The motion passed unanimously.

**Resolution 32-2024; Gas Tracker:** C. Lockridge stated the gas tracker reflects a .05¢ increase per 100 cubic feet. There was a motion made by Overton, second by Weishaar, to approve the resolution. The motion passed unanimously.

**CCMG Bid Award:** Eldridge and First Group Engineers reviewed the bids and recommended Town & Country Paving be awarded the bid. Eldridge said they are going to remove Milroy Street as part of the project, since the scheduled interceptor project will require the street to be tore up. There was a motion made by Overton, second by Arnold, to award the bid to Town & Country. The motion passed unanimously.

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

**Administrative Comments:**

**Phillips** thanked the Parks Dept. for a great Frosty Fest, it was very well attended.

**Keys** gave an update on APS Workforce Management and timekeeping. The city would like to transition to electronic timekeeping, rather than punching a timecard. Keys presented a proposal that included a one-time fee of \$5,305.46. After that there is a cost of \$38 per month and \$3.65 per employee per month thereafter. There was a motion by Rayburn, second by Weishaar, to pursue the time-keeping project. The motion passed unanimously.

**Watson** said there are better ways of streamlining, and happy to see we are looking ahead.

**Weishaar** Nothing.

**Rayburn** said on Harrison Street where the brick meets Cullen St, there is a new black stop sign and old stop sign.

**Arnold** said the Christmas lights, parks and the City looks great echoed Watson on finding efficiencies for streamlining.

**Overton** commented on the Christmas lights and the addition of parks lights.

**Superintendents Reports:**

**Police Dept:** Anderson had nothing.

**Law Dept:** Sammons had nothing.

**Utility Office:** Smart said the Christmas lights look fantastic.

**Building Dept:** Davis said Planning Commission meeting is Thursday at 5:30 pm to discuss the Housing and Parks Plan. Thursday 12/12 and Friday 12/13, ADA work will be done at the main entrance of City Hall and utility customers will be routed through the back door.

**Fire Dept:** Haun had nothing.

**Electric Dept:** Welker said they are starting to cut trees.

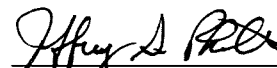
**Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewage:** Black said WTH Technology is not user friendly for field maintenance and would like his departments to transition to Ziptility. Discussion was had, but no action was taken.

**Gas Dept:** C. Lockridge had nothing.

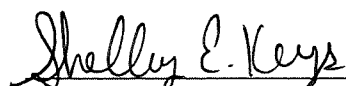
**Cemetery Dept:** Effinger said wreaths are being delivered to the cemetery Friday and will be set out Saturday.

**Park Dept:** Hall said she is moving forward with the Park's Comprehensive Plan. She will be meeting with an architect on January 10th to move the Park Headquarters to the old light plant.

There being nothing more to come before council, there was a motion by Rayburn, second by Overton, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

  
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Jeffrey S. Phillips, Mayor

Attest:

  
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Shelby E. Keys, Clerk-Treasurer