

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
COMMON COUNCIL & RENSSELAER UTILITY BOARD  
February 24, 2025**

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer and Rensselaer Utility Board met on February 24, 2025 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 Jeff Seger and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Answering roll call were: Mayor Jeff Phillips, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Chrissy Martin, 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, Gas Supt. Todd Wilson and Assistant Superintendent Josh Eldridge. Clerk-Treasurer Shelby Keys was absent.

Also in attendance were: Bob Schenk with Rensselaer Adventures, Harley Tomlinson, Jim Miller, Kara Fishburn.

The minutes of the February 10th, 2025 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:** None.

**Adoption of Ordinance 02-2025, Zoning & Subdivision Control Fee Schedule:** The ordinance has been discussed many times at Council, it comes with a favorable recommendation from the Plan Commission. There was a question about comparing fees to the surrounding communities in the county, Demotte was very comparable, with some of the fees even being higher. Weishaar said that there was a long list of fees, she's concerned about the amount of fees, she wondered if the Plan Commission was willing to look over the fee schedule again. Watson said he does not agree with the fees, there are too many. Mayor Phillips wondered if the fee schedule could be streamlined. Attorney Sammons says the Council can send it back to the Plan Commission to request it be refined. Arnold, said he would like to set the standard in Rensselaer, and feels this fee schedule does that, but he does not have a problem with sending the fee schedule back to the Plan Commission as well. Rayburn felt that someone would get a minimal amount of fees from the list, depending on what project they are completing. Building Commission Davis said the fee schedule is merely a reflection of just how complicated the zoning code can be to deal with. Rayburn surmised that a developer wouldn't be upset by the fees, they are the just the cost of doing a large project and Arnold agreed. Watson reiterated that he felt that the fees were too high, and the schedule should be sent back to the Plan Commission for further review. Mayor Phillips said the Ordinance will be sent for to the Plan Commission for streamlining.

**Adoption of Ordinance 05-2025, Vacation of a Public Way (A&P 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition Alleyway):** Davis said this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading of the ordinance regarding a county drainage ditch. Once approved, it will be recorded at the County and filed with the Auditor. There was a motion by Rayburn, second by Watson, to approve the ordinance. The motion passed unanimously.

**Adoption of Ordinance 06-2025, Councilmanic Districts:** Kara Fishburn was in attendance and asked if she could receive a shake file, Davis stated it would not be a problem. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading of the updated councilmanic districts. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Overton, to approve the ordinance. The motion passed unanimously.

**FMLA Request:** Martin said there is an FMLA request. There was a motion by Watson, second by Arnold, to approve the request. The motion passed unanimously.

**2024 USDA RD Report:** Black stated that the report was brought to council at the end of last year and more information was needed. The report has since been finalized. Smart has reviewed it and sent it to the other Superintendents for review. Once it is reviewed and approved by Mayor Phillips and Black, it will then need to be signed by Keys. There was a motion by Rayburn, second by Watson, to have Keys sign the report. The motion passed unanimously.

**JCEDO Contribution:** JCEDO Director could not attend the meeting, but a request letter from JCEDO has been distributed to council for consideration. Arnold would like to see a presentation outlining what a contribution to the JCEDO is used for. There was a motion by Watson, second by Arnold, to table the discussion until a presentation by the Director could be made. The motion passed unanimously.

**Credit Card Statement:** Phillips asked for council's permission to sign the credit card activity log. There was a motion by Overton, second by Rayburn, to allow Phillips to sign the credit card activity log. The motion passed unanimously.

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

**Unfinished Business:** None

**Committee Reports:** Meetings were held with Baker Tilly and Superintendents for a holistic spending approach and capital asset planning. The holistic plan can be utilized for 5 years, regardless of who is in charge, the plan will remain the same. Mayor Phillips likes the success this program has had with other cities and towns. Mayor asked if any of the Superintendents had any thoughts on the program, Smart stated that the Utilities are accustomed to preparing a capital asset plan, yearly. Smart stated they have had some conversations with Baker Tilly regarding the Utilities changing to a cash basis, instead of the current accrual basis, Baker Tilly could provide more information on this process.

**Administrative Comments:**

**Phillips** Thank you to Chief Matt Anderson for effectively putting the public fears at ease so quickly. He also wanted to congratulate the girls' basketball team, and good luck to them on Saturday.

**Martin** had nothing.

**Watson** had nothing.

**Weishaar** wishes the Lady Bombers good luck this weekend.

**Rayburn** asked if there was an update on the on the sewer on Melville, and a thank you to the Street Department for placing the recycling trailers at the park.

**Arnold** asked if the Reach Alert System was close to being ready. Arnold also asked about the Policy and Procedure manual status. Arnold finished up by asking if anything could be done about the live stream audio.

**Overton** good luck to girls' basketball team in the tournament this weekend.

**Superintendents Reports:**

**Police Dept:** Anderson had nothing.

**Law Dept:** Sammons had nothing.

**Utility Office:** Smart said they are working on the utility year-end reports.

**Building Dept:** Davis said he would like to remind Council that there is a Redevelopment meeting on Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 5pm.

**Fire Dept:** Haun said certifications were just finished up on all of the ladders, including the aerial truck, as well as oil changes on the trucks. Fire academy schooling has started and good attendance is reported, and the Fire Department will be ready to escort the Lady Bombers on Saturday.

**Electric Dept:** Welker said they have wrapped up tree cutting season, they received the invoice for the chassis digging truck.

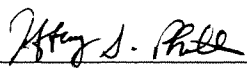
**Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewage:** Black stated that a pre-bid meeting would be held for the I-65 project. The brick street crosswalk situation will be addressed with contractor and subcontractor within the next 10-14 days. The Water tower project, he will get with Todd to finish the remaining items, and Melville sewer, the permits have been sent out, some discussion was made about the pipes. Eldridge has some updates about Community Crossings, Town and Country is hoping to send a crew at the end of April to begin paving The Recycling Grant is moving along. The team started on the Scott Street closure, should be completed the next day. The water leaks on College are believed to be repaired, it is difficult due to gas main being very close, Eldridge speculated that road salt, and possibly bad batch of old water pipe are to blame.

**Gas Dept:** Wilson said they are putting a gas line in at Sunset Ridge. The Gas department is also working with Rose Acres, they may increase BTU's from 8 million to 16 million, they are building two more barns.


**Cemetery Dept:** Effinger had nothing.

**Park Dept:** Hall said she's been in contact with roofing companies in regards to Larue Pool House and The Gifford Shelter, materials are ordered for spring. St John Paving has been contacted to line up surfacing and striping of the pickleball courts. Registration forms are going out to the public for summer baseball leagues this week. A disc golf league will be offered this summer as well. Hall stated she has been speaking with the Soil and Water Conservation District as well as Purdue Extension about collaborative efforts for summer programming with an education focus, they will also be conducting some walk through the park to identify invasive species, to replace with native species. The furniture was also moved into the light plant today.

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 6:37 p.m.

  
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Jeffrey S. Phillips, Mayor

Attest:

  
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Christina Martin, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer