



**CITY OF RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN
COMMON COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS**

January 9, 2018

Mayor Dan Toland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers located in City Hall.

City Council Members Present: Todd Bjerstedt, Jeff Bjork, Sean Downing, Christopher Gagne, Scott Morrissette, Diane Odeen, Hal Watson

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: City Administrator Scot Simpson; City Attorney Dan Gustafson; Police Chief Gordon Young; Assistant City Administrator Julie Bergstrom; Utility Director Kevin Westhuis; Management Analyst Fellow Jason Rohloff; Management Analyst Fellow Brandt Johnson; Management Analyst Keri Schreiner; Development Services Director Amy Peterson

Others Present: William Hansen, Bonnie Jones-Witthuhn, Shannon Zimmerman, others

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

December 12, 2017, Regular Meeting Minutes

MSC Morrissette/Odeen approve minutes. Unanimous.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Bills \$1,749,335.80 and \$1,285,355.46

MSC Morrissette/Watson move to approve bills subject to the comptroller. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT, PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

Bonnie Jones-Witthuhn – Chairperson for Among Friends which is a locally operated respite for individuals with dementia came to talk about the organization. She provided information about the group and its services. The Mayor asked her to share the organization’s contact information.

State Representative Shannon Zimmerman came to speak about the “dark store” topic. There is a loophole which allows companies – usually big box stores – to manipulate the law to receive a lower tax assessment based upon “dark stores” (empty stores). The burden of the tax then falls on the local residents. Zimmerman also provided an update on what was happening in Madison. There are two bipartisan bills in process to address this subject. He thinks the bills will come to the floor in the fall. Zimmerman is going to advocate strongly to close the loophole.

William Hansen, Town of River Falls – came to address the issue of the dams. He spoke about residents benefiting from the green energy production of the hydros produced year around. He asked the Council to pay attention to numbers that are there (the profitability of the hydros) and numbers not there (seasonal number of residents who kayak and trout fish). He feels that is what is being promoted if the hydros are removed.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Resolution Supporting Closure of Property Assessment Loopholes aka “Dark Store” Strategy→→***Pulled by Downing***

Resolution Regarding Migratory Bird Day→→*Pulled by Bjork*

Resolution No. 6222 - Supporting Closure of Property Assessment Loopholes aka “Dark Store” Strategy

Aldersperson Downing read a statement which talked about the companies utilizing the “dark store” strategy with the burden being placed unfairly on taxpayers. Downing also talked about the two bills currently at the State. He is in favor of the resolution. **MS Downing/Bjork move to approve the resolution. MS Morrissette/Odeen moved to amend the resolution to remove the wording, “Republican-controlled Indiana legislature”. The Mayor asked for a vote on the amendment. It passed unanimously. The Mayor asked for a vote on the original motion. It passed unanimously.**

Resolution No. 6223 - Regarding Migratory Bird Day

Aldersperson Bjork asked if the City had any obligations - whether costs or otherwise - for this event. Development Services Director Amy Peterson said this event helps with the City’s application status as a “Bird City”. Bjork asked what qualifies the City to be a “Bird City”. Peterson said there are a number of points. City Administrator Simpson said “Bird City” is a designation. He talked about some of the requirements necessary for the designation. Bjork asked about the costs per year.

Aldersperson Watson noted it provides City staff an opportunity to have a dialogue with the St. Croix Valley Bird Club. The bird day event is well-attended. He felt it was largely educational.

Aldersperson Morrissette believed City Planner Tony Steiner had done this application in the past and felt the time staff spent was nominal. Simpson said the City is a “high flyer” sponsor. Simpson provided further information. **MSC Bjork/Downing move to approve resolution. Unanimous.**

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

Ordinance 2018-01 - Amending Titles 9, 12, and 17 of the Municipal Code Regarding Hunting within City Limits-First Reading

Aldersperson Bjork asked if the City has a plan for hunting. Aldersperson Watson, a member of the Park Board, said the Board has reviewed this. He provided background noting a State law that requires cities not to disallow hunting within city limits and the ordinance addresses this. Watson said various committees reviewed land that maybe suitable and also the type of hunting that would least likely impact residential areas. There are three different areas which staff recommended for possible bow hunting, and he explained the locations.

Bjork asked about the process residents would go through to be able to hunt there. Aldersperson Morrissette noted the staff report which said permission is needed from City staff. He explained the information provided in the packet. Morrissette said the properties could potentially change in the future due to development or other factors.

Bjork asked more questions about the process. Operations Director Mike Stifter provided a detailed explanation. Alderspersons Downing and Gagne asked questions regarding land use, bow hunting on private property, and other technicalities. City Administrator Simpson provided answers.

Ordinance 2018-02 Amending Multifamily Design Standards in Section 17.73 of the Municipal Code-First Reading

Aldersperson Bjerstedt asked about the status on the update of Section 17.73. City Administrator Simpson said an update has not been started and could be 2-3 years out. Councilors had further questions about a comprehensive review of ordinances.

Aldersperson Watson felt this was something the Plan Commission should do at some point. Simpson said it was not the Plan Commission but staff that would need to do the review and that was the concern. He indicated this was not on the work plan to do in the next two years. Aldersperson Bjork asked if the review of ordinances could be added. Simpson said it could be added but the Council has already told staff what its priorities are. Bjork asked about flexibility on the plan. Simpson said if it was added, something would need to be removed due to staff workload.

Mayor Toland said this concern was discussed at Plan Commission with the understanding that this ordinance revision needed to be made as an interim fix but comprehensive review would need to wait. There was further discussion by Council. Morrisette was not in favor of changing the work plan. Bjork talked about the ordinances needing review. Morrisette provided more details about the situation which initiated the change in the ordinance. Alderperson Bjerstedt didn't feel this was a pressing issue.

REPORTS:

Report from River Falls Economic Development Corporation

Danielle Campeau, President of the River Falls Economic Development Corporation, provided a presentation for the Council. She talked about the history, the mission, the membership, and recent activities of the corporation. She talked about buildings that have recently gone up in the industrial parks. She spoke about the St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center, its mission, regional impact and return of investment. Campeau showed the floor plan of the building. She talked about the partners that were participating in the project. Campeau said the building would be opening in February with a grand opening in April. She stood for questions.

Alderperson Bjork said he appreciated the tour of the building. He asked about signed leases. Campeau said two bays are leased along with some private office space. There are also co-working spaces taken. There was further discussion.

Administrator's Report

City Administrator Simpson made an announcement about elections, progress with Wisconsin DOT on Hwy. 29, and other items.

Comptroller's Report for November, 2017

Comptroller Odeen read the following report: general fund revenues through November were \$9,171,817 or 90 percent of budgeted. This compares with \$11,339,037 this time last year. The sale of land to Land O' Lakes for the WinField projects for \$1.88 million accounts for most of this difference. Revenues in November include \$1,690,009 in state shared revenues.

Expenditures through November were \$8,783,310 compared with \$7,974,019 a year ago. This is consistent with prior years at 86 percent of budgeted amounts.

Net revenues over expenditures at the end of November is a budget surplus of \$388,507.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor's Appointments

Business Improvement District

Reappointment of Terry McKay through December 2020

Downtown Design Review Committee

Reappointment of Mark Paschke through June 2019

MSC Odeen/Watson move to approve appointments. Unanimous.

MSC Bjerstedt/Downing move to adjourn at 7:37 p.m. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi McKahan, Deputy City Clerk