



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

September 8, 2020

Mayor Dan Toland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in a virtual meeting format due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The City Council Chambers was open for public to attend.

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

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: City Administrator Scot Simpson; IT Specialist Jon Smits; City Clerk Amy White; Assistant City Administrator Jason Stroud; City Attorney Chris Gierhart; Community Development Director Amy Peterson; Utility Director Kevin Westhuis; others

Others Present: Benjamin Fochs, AZ Snyder, Jim Smith, Bob Pfister

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

August 18 Special and August 25 Regular Meeting Minutes

MS Morrissette/Watson move to approve minutes. The roll call vote passed unanimously 7-0 with all voting in favor.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Bills: \$1,578,628.75

MS Morrissette/Downing move to approve bills subject to the Comptroller. The roll call vote passed unanimously 7-0 with all voting in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT, PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

Benjamin Fuchs, 2529 Powell Avenue – thanked Council for approving the future land use map. He expressed concerns about boundaries in TID 16.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Acknowledgement of the following minutes: Joint Meeting of the Park and Recreation Advisory Board and the Historic Preservation Commission; Park and Recreation Advisory Board – 7/15/20; River Falls Housing Authority – 7/15/20; EMS Advisory Board 2/3/20; Plan Commission – 3/9/20; Board of Review – 8/6/20; Library Board – 7/13/20

Resolution Approving Advanced Disposal Contract Extension →→ ***Pulled by Downing***

Preliminary No. 6512 - Resolution Declaring Intent to Exercise Special Assessment Police Powers under Section 66.0703 Wisconsin Statutes for the Benefit of the River Falls Business Improvement District

Aldersperson Morrissette asked for clarification on the Preliminary Resolution Declaring Intent to Exercise Special Assessment Police Powers. He wasn't sure what that meant. Aldersperson Odeen said this sets a hearing. The Mayor said it would come back before the Council in October for a public hearing. City Administrator

Simpson said this was part of a legal process for levying the assessments on property owners. This gives them a notice under the statutes. He talked further about the process.

With no other comments/questions, MS Morrisette/Odeen to approve the remainder of the Consent Agenda. The roll call vote passed unanimously 7-0 with all voting in favor.

Resolution No. 6513 - Approving Advanced Disposal Contract Extension

Aldersperson Downing said over the past year, he has been trying to find ways to help improve City services regarding recycling. He thanked the City staff for working with him. Downing doesn't believe there is much competition between rates at present. He has been looking at ways to expand the service and save money but the market this year has made it difficult. He believes this is the best option. Downing asked Simpson to provide further information.

Simpson talked about looking at electronic recyclables and other ideas Downing had. Simpson said the price is driven primarily by some fixed costs – the route-based costs. He talked about tonnage and getting good recycling rates in the past. Simpson spoke further about other services that were included in the contract.

The Mayor asked for a motion. MS Downing/Watson move to approve resolution.

Aldersperson Gagne asked who is doing the customer service. Simpson provided an answer and said that the City takes responsibility for customer service concerns. Utility Director Westhuis said that the City works directly with Advanced Disposal and said they are extremely responsive. He advised customers to call City Hall. Gagne appreciated the staff's work.

Aldersperson Plunkett had questions regarding recycling, disposing of items at landfills, fuel costs and reporting. Plunkett would like to see the numbers before voting on what recycled materials are collected, how many of those materials are going into landfills, and what is the market value of the items that are collected.

Utility Director Westhuis said Jim Smith, District Manager, and Bob Pfister, Marketing Manager, were available for questions. Smith said the recycling is collected and goes to the Twin Cities. All products that have a market are recycled. The processing costs have increased dramatically and the value of each of the commodities has reduced significantly over the last few years. Smith didn't have the numbers but could get them back to Westhuis tomorrow.

Westhuis told Plunkett he would get the data and pass it along. Plunkett wanted the data before voting on the contract. He is concerned that some of the materials are being contaminated in the single stream hauling process reducing the value of the recycling making it an energy cost not a savings and limiting materials for the domestic production of goods.

Westhuis referred the question to Pfister. Pfister said all the recycling goes to a single stream processing facility; none goes to the landfill. There is about 90 tons of recycling and 225 tons of refuse a month taken out of River Falls. He doesn't think there is an inordinate amount of contaminants from River Falls compared to other communities. He noted the contamination rate industry average is 16-20 percent. He doesn't know that it is any different as he doesn't have any specific information on that. The cost of recycling is \$45-\$50 per ton. He talked about China shutting the doors to recycling and the growth in recycling due to Covid.

Plunkett reviewed the costs stating he estimated \$4,500 in processing costs monthly and nothing for landfill as Pfister said zero of the recycling was going to a landfill – which Plunkett found it hard to believe. Plunkett didn't appreciate getting gas lamped as a Council member regarding what happens at the single stream collection facility. He felt honesty in presenting before Council was a very important thing.

Plunkett asked about the number of residential accounts in the City. Westhuis said there are approximately 6,500. Plunkett said there was a \$28,000 increase in costs to residents versus \$4,500 cost of processing the materials. He said that would explain the rise in Advanced Disposal's stock price. Before voting on the contract,

Plunkett would be interested in the materials collected in River Falls which should have been monthly reported accorded to Section 6.3 of the current contract.

Simpson provided an answer to Plunkett regarding fuel costs. He thought the wording was unique to River Falls, and it is an advantage to the City because it raises the bar pretty high before any fuel surcharges would be added from the hauler. He explained how the provider would rather have a tiered approach.

Plunkett thanked Simpson but said that still doesn't get into Section 6.3 regarding reporting on recycled materials and if the paper is getting contaminated and is unsuitable for domestic mills. He spoke further about shipping materials and China, and again said he wanted to look at the material that should have been available according to Section 6.3 and examine it and maybe talk with other facilities in the area that have a more reliable collection method that results in less contamination of paper products.

Call to question by Odeen. The Mayor asked for a roll call vote. The roll call vote was 5-2 with all voting in favor except for Downing and Plunkett.

The Mayor asked for a roll call vote on the motion to approve the resolution. The roll call vote was 6-1 with all voting in favor except for Plunkett.

REPORTS:

Review of Resolution No. 6501 - Resolution Relating to the Covid-19 Public Health Emergency;
Recommending the Use of Face Coverings in Public in the City of River Falls

Pierce County Health Director AZ Snyder was available for questions.

Downing asked how contact tracing was going. Snyder said okay. The vast majority of people are respectful and cooperative but there are some cases when people refuse to call public health back. She provided further details. Downing asked about the transition for college students. Snyder said it has been going well in River Falls. The university has a contact tracing team. She spoke about that process.

Plunkett asked about university/school openings and the expectations. Snyder talked about openings at other UW campuses where they are struggling. In River Falls, about 260 students have been tested by either antigen or PCR. We are at about a three percent positivity rate.

Morrisette asked about the difference between PCR and antigen testing. Snyder answered speaking in detail about differences between the tests.

Gagne asked about probable versus confirmed cases. Snyder explained in great detail and talked about the importance of both in reporting numbers for the county. Gagne requested separation of the numbers in probable versus confirmed. City Administrator Stroud said we can but with the caveat that the math may not add up the same. Gagne reiterated he wanted to see the probable versus confirmed separately. Stroud said in terms of whether probables are to be included, he would defer to Snyder. Snyder explained the reason probables should be included in the numbers and answered follow-up questions from Gagne.

Watson asked about the effect of the governor's masking mandate. Snyder said it was too soon to tell, but anecdotally, the cases have been going down. She couldn't interpret that without a counterfactual to the masking mandate. Watson asked if she believed the masking mandate as it is laid out is adequate for its intended purpose. Snyder said yes.

Odeen understood that accuracy is difficult with this disease because it is new. Does the accuracy of probables versus confirmed cases would influence how cases are handled? Snyder said they are careful before they confirm a probable case. We have to have a high index of clinical suspicion. Snyder provided further details.

Downing asked if there was a percent of infection rate that Snyder believes is not properly being recorded because people don't get tested. Snyder said they do not that information.

Stroud addressed a request from Gagne during previous discussion. He felt weekly numbers were important because that is how staff would recommend moving between phases. On Pierce County's dashboard, probable and actual case numbers are combined so he cannot report out a delineation on those two. Gagne asked to have those numbers – probable versus confirmed – split at some point. He feels that would give clarity and accuracy to the numbers.

Plunkett asked about moving from Phase 2 to 3. He asked what happens if it goes the other way. Do we have a metric? He asked for more information on health impacts on those who survive the infection. Snyder said long-term health impacts are still emerging and provided more detail about the data.

City Administrator Simpson said the City is operating under “Crushing Covid” which is a guide based on a three-step program by the State of Wisconsin. There has been a significant amount of discussion between Public Health and cities about the phasing. There is still significant discussion if the current dashboard is the right one. Simpson talked about the phases and moving within them saying he is relying on Public Health. At best, he thinks the City will be a Phase 2 for the remainder of the calendar year. Under the Emergency Order, the Mayor, with the guidance of County Health and staff, can let the Council know which phase we are moving to. He provided further information.

Stroud said we don't have a specific numeric value for moving forward or backwards but it's more about the totality of the circumstances at the time with consulting the state's Badger Bounce Back Plan, local Public Health, and our current situation.

Gagne asked what's the main goal? He is still looking for information. Gagne spoke further.

Administrator's Report

There were no questions about the report.

At 7:33 p.m., MS Bjerstedt/Downing move to adjourn. The roll call vote passed 7-0 with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi McKahan, Deputy Clerk