



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

September 12, 2023

Mayor Toland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

City Council Members Present: Mayor Dan Toland, Todd Bjerstedt, Jeff Bjork, Nick Carow, Sean Downing, Scott Morrissette, Alyssa Mueller

Members Absent: Diane Odeen

Staff Present: City Administrator Scot Simpson; City Attorney Chris Gierhart; IT Specialist Jon Smits; Utility Director Kevin Westhuis; Police Chief Gordon Young; Finance Director Josh Solinger; Library Director Tanya Misselt; Adult Services & Circulation Librarian Heather Johnson; Facility Maintenance Supervisor Tom Schwalen; Management Analyst Fellow Sara Kasel

Others: Sean Lentz, Melissa Abdouch, Dana Linscott, Ayanna Raven, Patrick Callan, others

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 22, 2023, regular and Board of Review minutes

MSC Downing/Bjork move to approve minutes. Unanimous.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Bills: \$2,935,187.37

MSC Downing/Bjerstedt move to approve bills. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT, PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

Melissa "Mei Mei" Abdouch, 859 Brentwood Circle – thanked Council for approving the June Taste of River Falls She came to speak about a request for an October Taste of River Falls event.

Dana Linscott, 11395 County Road M – came to speak about local homelessness.

Ayanna Raven Benitez - came to speak about local homelessness.

Patrick Callan - came to address comments made at a prior Council meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution Approving River Falls Business Leaders Request for Street Closure for Taste of River Falls→→***pulled by Bjork***

Resolution Approving River Falls Business Leaders Request for Open Container Exemption for Taste of River Falls→→***pulled by Bjork***

Resolution Approving River Falls Business Leaders Request for Noise Control Exemption for Taste of River Falls→→***pulled by Bjork***

Resolution Approving River Falls Business Leaders Request for City Assistance for Taste of River Falls→→***pulled by Bjork***

Alderperson Bjork asked for Melissa Abdouch to come to the podium to answer questions about the Taste of River Falls event. He asked her what was the purpose of the event? Abdouch answered in detail saying they want to showcase the downtown. Bjork asked about the need for open container.

He asked about the plan if alcohol is or isn't approved. Abdouch said if the alcohol request is not approved, the event would be held at one of the breweries or wineries. She spoke further providing the reason for the open container request. She clarified that they did not request Riverwalk to be a part of the open container area. They wanted it to end at the stage in Veterans Park.

Bjork asked how long the request for the open container is. Abdouch said it was from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. **Bjork had no other questions and moved to approve the resolutions. Mueller seconded.**

Alderson Downing wanted to hear staff's concerns regarding street closures. City Administrator Simpson thought that the Walnut to Maple closure might be a concern, but staff did not have a major concern and felt they could work with the promoter. Downing thanked Simpson for his response.

Abdouch said Walnut would not be closed. She provided clarification of the street closures. Bjork asked further questions.

Alderson Morrissette appreciated Abdouch promoting downtown, but he can't endorse the open container. He had a concern about using room tax money or having the city pay the fees of \$3,500 for the event. He thinks they need to be paid by the organization. Morrissette talked about the room tax fund saying the fund doesn't have an excess balance to support this type of activity. Morrissette is okay with the noise ordinance exemption and street closures but feels strongly the organization needs to pay the costs the city is incurring. He questions whether the city needs another street closure event. Morrissette doesn't want to see frequent closures. He urged the council to consider how the \$3,500 is paid for.

There was further discussion with Abdouch addressing Morrissette's concerns. Morrissette spoke further about open container concerns and Abdouch responded.

Alderson Carow addressed open container concerns and said we should strive for safe, legal, and rare. He asked Abdouch to bring back some metrics supporting her claim that this event is driving business. Carow was concerned about dueling entities trying to drive things on the economic side. The dual thing would be well-served to be resolved. That's where the room tax challenge comes from.

Downing appreciated Abdouch's willingness to work with the council in the past. He talked about addressing the fees in the future. He talked about Abdouch's group helping build back the downtown after Covid.

Abdouch said her group wants to work with council, and they are doing a better job working with the chamber.

Morrissette said the reason for his focus on the cost is because of other groups coming in and asking for the same thing. Council must be consistent with the costs and fees and recouping the cost to the city. His desire is to set a precedent to have groups understand the costs that need to be passed along.

Alderson Mueller said she is enthusiastically supporting Abdouch's requests. **With no further discussion, the mayor asked for a motion on the resolutions.**

Resolution No. 6818 - Approving River Falls Business Leaders Request for Street Closure for Taste of River Falls

MSC Bjork/Mueller move to approve resolution. Unanimous.

Resolution No. 6819 - Approving River Falls Business Leaders Request for Open Container Exemption for Taste of River Falls

MS Bjork/Mueller move to approve resolution. The motion passed 4-2 with Downing, Carow, Bjork and Mueller voting in favor and Morrissette and Bjerstedt against.

Resolution No. 6820 - Approving River Falls Business Leaders Request for Noise Control Exemption for Taste of River Falls

MSC Bjork/Downing move to approve resolution. Unanimous.

Resolution No. 6821 - Approving River Falls Business Leaders Request for City Assistance for Taste of River Falls

MS Bjork/Mueller move to approve resolution. Morrissette thinks the resolution should be amended with the promoter to bear the cost of the event. **Motion by Morrissette to amend the resolution and ask the promoter to pay the fees as outlined in the staff report related to the event. The motion died due to lack of a second.**

Simpson said the council has the original motion as presented which would be the city not charging the promoter and the costs coming out of the business and development fund. The mayor asked for questions or comments. Downing would like to see council working on that in the future - building a participant fee that is agreeable. The mayor asked for a vote. **The motion passed 5-1 with Downing, Carow, Bjork, Bjerstedt and Mueller voting in favor and Morrissette against.**

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution No. 6822 - Awarding the Sale of \$18,415,000 General Obligation Corporate Purpose Bonds, Series 2023A

Sean Lentz from Ehlers and Associates provided a presentation on the two bonding resolutions. He talked about the city's bond rating of Aa2 and provided details. Lentz spoke about the sales results for the two bonds including the winning bidders, interest rates, and the next steps. He stood for questions from council.

Morrissette commented on the aggressive interest rates. Downing asked about Section 8 – arbitrage bonds. Lentz gave an explanation about arbitrage and answered follow up questions from Downing.

MS Morrissette/Bjork move to approve the resolution. The mayor asked for a roll call vote. The vote passed unanimously 6-0.

Resolution No. 6823 - Authorizing the Issuance and Sale of a \$4,933,000 Water System Revenue Bond Anticipation Note

MS Bjork/Bjerstedt move to approve the resolution. Lentz noted the bond amount had changed from \$5,030,000 to \$4,933,000. **Bjork/Bjerstedt moved to approve the resolution with the updated bond amount. The mayor asked for a roll call vote. The vote passed unanimously 6-0.**

Resolution No. 6824 - Awarding Bid for City Hall/Public Library Roof Replacement

MSC Morrissette/Downing move to approve the resolution. Unanimous.

REPORTS:

Administrator's Report

Simpson provided dates for upcoming events.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor's Appointments

Historic Preservation Commission

Appointment of Dan Geister through January 2026

Extraterritorial Zoning Committee

Appointment of Rob Gorman – indefinite appointment

**MSC Morrissette/Bjerstedt move to approve the mayor's appointments. Unanimous.
MSC Bjerstedt/Morrissette move to adjourn at 7:24 p.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi McKahan, Deputy Clerk