

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
MAY 18, 2021 – 7:30 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

President of Council Cris Nesbitt called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Nesbitt led those in attendance in a prayer and then the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Council Members Present: Mr. Powell, Mr. Gertz, Mr. Lynd, Mr. Albrinck, Mr. Lindeman & Mrs. Eadicicco.

Motion made by President of Council Cris Nesbitt to excuse Mr. Fischesser. Motion carried by voice vote.

OTHER CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Law Director Dave Stevenson, Treasurer Mel Gertz, Auditor Sabrina Smith & Clerk of Council Carla Kacher.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 4 (Regular)

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION – None

COMMUNICATIONS – None

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

FINANCE: Anthony Gertz

- We are holding our own financially. Thanked Mel, Dave & Sabrina for working so hard to get potential funding from other institutions should we have needed it during the COVID time period.
- Letter submitted by Mr. Gertz to Patrick Ross dated 05-18-21:

*Mr. Patrick Ross
Safety Service Director
City of Reading
1000 Market Street
Reading, OH 45215
RE: Safety Service Director's Failure to Respond*

Dear Mr. Ross:

On numerous occasions, no less than six to eight times, I have left messages for you to return my call. I am anticipating that we may have to set up a meeting to review my concerns. Although as a member of council I have been informed in meetings and communications that you are available 24/7, I have not been able to adequately get any communication. I have several concerns which include but are not limited to the following:

- (1) What is the current status of our funding for the Community Development Block Grant monies that were allocated for 2018, 2019 and 2020 and must be spent this year?*
- (2) What are the proposals for the next allocation for 2021, 2022 and 2023 of the Community Development Block Grant?*
- (3) What, if any, steps are being taken to secure and pursue clean-up currently of the property recently acquired by the Port Authority formerly known as the PNC property?*
- (4) I still have no record or copy of the certification from the Budget Commission for the current year, 2021 relating to our appropriations.*
- (5) What are the amounts of grants received from Duke Energy for grants given to the City for various goals and has all the money been spent?*

(6) *What was the final amount for the easements granted to Duke for the constn. lction of the gas pipeline: project and have the funds been delivered to the city treasury? I believe the amount was \$220,000.00.*

(7) *What is the current status of the Metropolitan Sewer Project extending from Gahl Terrace, Reading Road and West Street?*

(8) *I am curious where the money has been appropriated to cover the settlement of the action and dispute surrounding the Police Department.*

(9) *What is the update of the extensive disturbing traffic congestion caused by the Duke pipeline project and how soon will that be completed?*

(10) *What, if any, additional monies are we to anticipate from the Federal Government concerning the extensive proposal for stimulus and how you anticipate it be spent?*

(11) *Is it true that there are not any facilities at the new baseball project the Reading Community School is building for restrooms and other such accommodations?*

(12) *What, if any, knowledge do you have of how the property at Jefferson Avenue belonging to the school is going to be used? What is the city's position as to their proposals?*

At this time I have only outlined these twelve items. There are additional ones I would like to pursue. My constituents in Ward 2 often have many questions for which I cannot adequately explain. Since it is not often that the Administration engages City Council in recent times, my only method I may have to explore as an alternative for other legal action would have be to file a lawsuit for discovery and take an extensive deposition of yourself and those powers in authority for an explanation.

A response to this written request would be greatly appreciated. It Is my intention to place this of record into the Council minutes for public notice.

*Very truly yours,
Anthony J. Gertz
Councilman, Ward 2*

UTILITIES, LANDS & BUILDINGS: Don Lindeman

- Debris by the City dumpsters has since been cleaned up
- Will Duke be taking care of any needed repairs made on their properties after Duke leaves?
- Has there been any work on the Council Chambers during the COVID period?
- Has there been any action/work on the poles at the school?

ZONING, PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT: Dave Powell

- I made contact with the building department again last week about a zoning matter on Clark Road. I will continue to follow up until the matter is resolved based on what our zoning ordinance states.

LAWS AND CONTRACTS: Katie Eadicicco

- I held a Laws and Contracts committee meeting on Tuesday, May 11. We had a productive meeting and worked on the wording for the rental registration form and the ordinance. I passed the information on to Dave Stevenson for his review and to get all the legal wording sorted out.

I posted about the meeting on my council Facebook page and I want to take this time to answer some of the questions that I've been asked:

Why doesn't the city just get the information from the tax department or Hamilton County Auditor?

Well, the tax department, by law, is not allowed to release ANY of the information they collect. This is not a city enacted law, this is from the IRS. We cannot override this or pass an ordinance to do so. So our tax department cannot share any

information with other city departments.

As for Hamilton County Auditor, that would be a great idea in theory except that as Mr. Powell and I went through the list from the Auditor we found a lot of properties that were missing or had incorrect information. Also, the information provided by the county is very vague. It might have the mortgage company or a bank or a shell company listed as the owner. Sometimes, the phone number listed is incorrect or the information is not updated. There's no contact name or email listed. This in turn takes more time for our city departments to figure out who to contact.

Will we need to hire personnel to manage the program or will this take more of a city employee's time, driving up costs or property taxes?

No. This would be an online form accessed through our city's website. City employees, if need be, could go in through the back end of the website and export the list to a spreadsheet or search for a property. Similar to the website I use at work. If someone buys a ticket, I can export the list to a spreadsheet and search for a name or print the list. It takes only a minute or two to do so. This list would allow our city departments a more streamlined way to search for a property and/or its owner and the owner's contact information.

As far as additional costs go, I see this as being a way for the city to actually save money as we won't be spending extra manpower and hours searching for property owners and it will be a centralized place to search. Also, being able to reach owners would take some responsibility off the city as there are properties for which we can't find the owner and instead of spending the extra time jumping through hoops to find them, the city will end up cutting the grass to at least keep the property looking somewhat decent for the neighbors. This uses city resources that could be spent elsewhere.

Why not just make list of problem properties as complaints come in?

That would pretty much defeat the purpose. If a property is a nuisance and we can't find the owner, what good would adding that property to a list do? This is why we need to have owner contact information readily available.

Is there a fee or cost to property owners?

There is no registration fee. No application, no application fee. No yearly inspections and no inspection fees. Other communities require property owners to complete an application with a fee before even being approved to own rental property. Others require yearly inspections at a cost.

We would not be doing that. All the property owner would have to do is register and again, there is no fee to do so. That said, if the owner would fail to register or the information is not updated, then there could be a fine. There has to be an incentive for owners to complete otherwise we'll be in the same boat as Hamilton County as far as having incomplete information.

Why stop the bigger rental companies from buying property within the city?

If a bigger company wants to buy property and take care of the property, then great. However, that typically does not seem to be the case. I've mentioned here before about a house in Eagleview owned by one of these companies that had mold growing up the walls and foundation problems. When the company was alerted to these issues, they didn't care and said that they'd find someone to rent it. This is unsafe for the renters.

Also, I have talked to several realtors who have mentioned how these companies make cash offers on homes with no contingencies and buy them as is. It's an offer that's hard for home sellers to resist and unfortunately, families who are looking to buy in Reading have their offers rejected because of these companies. And many times, the homes will end up falling into disrepair or sit empty for some time.

Why should we pass an ordinance requiring property owners to fill out a registration if many don't do so with Hamilton County?

Well, just because people choose not to follow laws, doesn't mean they don't matter. And again, Hamilton County is a separate entity and this would only be used within the city of Reading. Owning any type of property comes with responsibility and if you want to own rental property in Reading then this would be part of that responsibility.

Property maintenance and problem and nuisance properties are the **number one** issue people contact me about. Really it's a very simple. Just an easy way for our city departments to find and contact owners of properties if need be. That's it. Again, no yearly inspections are required. Just quick form for owners to complete. It would be a simplified version of what we have in our City's Master Plan. Responsible property owners shouldn't have any issues with this.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY: Randy Fischesser

- Absent. Report given by Clerk of Council, Carla Kacher:
- There is an ordinance on the agenda this evening for the purchase of 2 police cruiser SUV's. This is an anticipated annual expense that is taken from the Capital fund. As stated in the ordinance, this needs to be passed as an emergency measure so

that we can get the order processed and get on the list. The \$81,000.00 includes removal and reinstalling equipment and the lettering and striping. Passage this evening would be greatly appreciated.

- This week is National EMS week. Every year one week is set aside to thank our life squad members for their service. I would like to thank all of Reading's Fire/EMS personnel for the outstanding job they do every day of the year. The citizens of Reading are fortunate to have such a dedicated and professional group of people.

SERVICE: Dennis Albrinck

- Service department will be receiving the new truck at the end of May.
- Mechanics test will be administered this Saturday, May 22. Interviews to follow.
- Service Department has begun street painting and striping.
- The Administration is looking at ways to purchase a mini-excavator
- Service Department has been power washing the stadium for the Reading High School graduation ceremonies.

RECREATION: Tom Lynd

- Pool sign ups have been busy the last two Saturdays. Still one more Saturday to sign up between 10 and 12:00 at the Fieldhouse. You can also sign up at City Hall during business hours.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Eadicicco - Randy brought up the council schedule during our last meeting and I did look into it. In ordinance 214.06 it does state that as of January 1, 1998 council shall meet on the first and third Tuesday of every month. The only thing that needs to be changed is the time. The ordinance has 8:00PM listed and not 7:30. I would like to move forward with changing the time to 7:30 in the ordinance and I'm wondering if I have to write up an entire new ordinance to make that change or if that's something we can vote on now.

One other thing we need to look at is whether the notification for a special meeting is 12 hours or 24. In section 214.06 of the ordinance it says 24, but I was told that it had been changed to 12.

I, personally, like meeting twice a month. I think we get a lot more work done, and it make us more focused. I would like to keep the schedule this way, especially as someone with kids it certainly is more accommodating. I do feel that we do not need to meet every week. We can always call a special meeting if need be.

- Mr. Powell stated he would be fine with either option.
- Mr. Gertz voiced that he'd like us to go back to the 4 meetings a month.
- Mr. Lynd is in favor of meeting on the 1st and 3rd.
- Mr. Albrinck thinks meeting on the 1st and 3rd is adequate and reiterated a "Special Meeting" can be called if needed.
- Mr. Lindeman voiced his opinion that it is a better trade off to have the Administration present at 2 meetings a month to answer questions directly as opposed to 4 meetings a month without them.
- Mrs. Eadicicco commented that Randy Fischesser has mentioned that he is in favor of meeting the 1st and 3rd Tuesday. Mr. Lindeman also said Mr. Fischesser has commented that Council is more productive when we have just 2 meetings.
- Mrs. Eadicicco believes meeting twice a month has made Council more focused and is more productive and would like to keep meeting on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month. She also pointed out that we are the only Community in the area currently meeting every Tuesday.

REPORTS OF OFFICIALS

MAYOR: Robert "Bo" Bemmes

- No Report (Absent)

SAFETY SERVICE DIRECTOR: Patrick Ross

- No Report (Absent)

LAW DIRECTOR: Dave Stevenson

- No Report. Clarified that the "Rules of Council" decide when the meetings are. The "Special Meeting 12 hour limit notification" is written in the revised code and can be called by the Mayor or 3 Council Members. 7:30 p.m. has been the Council start time since the 1990s.

TREASURER: Mel Gertz

- April 2021 we collected a total of \$1,168,458.00. We are currently running \$526,716 ahead or 20.2% ahead of where we were at the end of 2020. YTD, for the month of May, we've collected \$628,937.00. We are \$105,000 ahead of where we were for the total month of May 2020.

AUDITOR: Sabrina Smith

- No Report.

READING OF RESOLUTIONS

1) THE FOLLOWING FINAL RESOLUTION ENACTED BY THE CITY OF READING, OHIO, HEREINAFTER REFERRED TO AS THE LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY/LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY OR "LPA", IN THE MATTER OF THE STATE PROPOSED PROJECT *(First Reading)*

Motion made by Mr. Gertz, seconded by Mr. Albrinck to suspend the rule that requires a second or third reading.

Motion carried by a 6-0 roll call vote.

Motion made by Mrs. Eadicicco, seconded by Mr. Lindeman to adopt the resolution.

Motion carried by a 6-0 roll call vote.

RESOLUTION ADOPTED

RESOLUTION NUMBER 2021-18R

READING OF ORDINANCES

1) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SAFETY/SERVICE DIRECTOR TO PURCHASE TWO (2) POLICE VEHICLES THROUGH THE STATE COOPERATIVE PURCHASING PROGRAM AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY *(First Reading)*

Motion made by Mr. Lindeman, seconded by Mr. Lynd to suspend the rule that requires a second or third reading.

Motion carried by a 6-0 roll call vote.

Motion made by Mr. Lynd, seconded by Mr. Powell to adopt the ordinance.

Motion carried by a 6-0 roll call vote.

ORDINANCE ADOPTED

ORDINANCE NUMBER 2021-19

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Smith – Farmers Market starts this Friday, May 21 from 4p.m.-7p.m.

If you'd like to get involved with "Walking with a Purpose" please call Sabrina Smith at 513-733-4879

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was declared adjourned at 8:40 pm.

X_____

CARLA KACHER
Clerk of Council

X_____

CRIS NESBITT
President of Council