

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
JULY 11, 2023 – 7:30 PM**

For the full detail of this evening's Council Meeting, please visit www.watchreadingohio.com.

CALL TO ORDER

President Mr. Daum called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

ROLL CALL

Council Members Present: Mr. Powell, Mr. Bronner, Mr. Bishop, Mr. Boehner, Mr. Thamann, Mrs. Kroeger & Mrs. Eadicicco.

OTHER CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Clerk of Council Carla Kacher

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion to approve the July 3 (Special) Council Minutes did not pass. Mr. Boehner stated that Council should not have had a first reading of the 2024 Budget at this meeting since the advertised purpose of the meeting was solely to vote on the DORA legislation. It is Mr. Boehner's belief that that was a violation of the "Open Meetings" law. Mr. Powell pointed out that at the July 3 meeting, he asked the Law Director, Dave Stevenson, if Council could read the Budget Ordinance at this meeting and he did not see any issue with it. President of Council, Dwight Daum, said he remembered that conversation. Mr. Boehner continued that the only problem he sees, according to the rules, is that the Mayor can also call a Special Council Meeting but that the Mayor would have had to have something in the advertisement that would have allowed the Budget Ordinance. Mr. Boehner gave the advertisement example of "and any other business to come up for Council," as a way the advertisement could have been written that would have captured such an occurrence like reading the Budget Ordinance at the July 3 meeting. Mr. Boehner would like clarity on how this meeting was advertised at next week's meeting.

Motion to approve the June 20 Council Minutes made by Mr. Powell, seconded by Mrs. Kroeger. Motion carried by a voice vote.

PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE 2024 BUDGET

Mr. Daum declared the Public Hearing open at 7:33 p.m. Mr. Daum noted that there was only one person in the audience (Tony Gertz) and that person did not have any comments for the 2024 Budget. No communications were received regarding the Budget.

- Finance Committee Chair, Mr. Bronner, gave the following report regarding the Budget:

General Fund Revenue

- Taxes, Local Government Fund projected to be relatively flat
- Charges For Services includes all park and truck rentals, cable and tower fees, pool revenue, and revenue received for providing police, fire, paramedic services to Arlington and Amberley. Conservative estimate for this revenue
- Fines, licenses, permits-majority from mayor's court, but also includes building and zoning permits-budget slight increase
- Transfers- Projecting increase from 2023-2024 but decrease from 2022. This is result of much more being transferred in 2022 than 2021. Average of those two years was 7 million and 2023-2024 reflects increases over that number
- Other sources-trash and recycling. In 2020 and 2021 we received refunds from BWC during covid. Those were one time sources

General Fund Expenditures

- Overall budgeted increase is 2.85% for 2024
- 65% of overall general fund budget is for Police and Fire Department
- General Gov't Operations drop from 2022 due to several one-time operational expenditures
- Health insurance increase only \$35,000-\$40,000 due to being in self-insured group. Had we been on our own, our increase would be 2-4 times that amount.
- Workers comp premiums have decreased due to healthier, less injured workforce

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
JULY 11, 2023 – 7:30 PM**

Non-General Fund

- Street Maintenance- Revs and Exp increased in past several years due to revenue increase associated with state gas tax increase. Some salaries, road expenses, and capital expenses related to road maintenance
- State highway-gas tax-reading road. Utilize for road salt
- Tax-2% Earnings tax primary source of money for general fund
- Stadium- Still has over \$100,000 in it going back several years
- Motor Vehicle License-license fees... mostly used for road engineering
- Streets and Curbs- Revenue tied to earning tax. Used for road loans and city match on road grants
- Covid Relief- money from fed gov't
- 340 fund- revenue from property tax
 - Use funds for police cruisers, streetscape bond(last payment 2023)
 - Approximately \$150,000 will be open- can use for annual repayment on loan for capital city projects.
 - Recommend council prioritize major capital needs and move forward with one or multiple projects in 2023-2024
- Fire/EMS Fund- paramedic transports. Funds purchase of Fire/EMS Department major capital needs
- Municipal Road- County Road Grant -Fuhrman is next road(engineering ongoing)
- Water- Water Department Operations
- Sewer Disposal-MSD
- Sewer Service Fee-7% fee for collecting MSD charge

OTHER

- Only outstanding loan is for Road and Water Meter Combo. Pay for these from water department, streets and curbs, and street maintenance

Mr. Thamman pointed out that our revenue stream is growing faster than our expenses, reflecting a conservative financial approach. Mr. Bronner agreed and added that we are paying off a big 20-year streetscape loan this year.

- Mr. Powell stated he'd like Council to take a look at "better funding" the Retirement Fund, calling it a serious underfunded liability, so we're not scrambling in the future when employees retire.

- Mr. Boehner would like to take a million dollars from the Earnings Tax Fund and put it in the Growth Fund. He would also like to put another \$500,000.00 from the Earnings Tax Fund into the 340 Capital Fund. Mr. Boehner would also like to take all the money out of the COVID Fund and put it in the 340 Capital Fund. He pointed out that the one million dollars in the Growth Fund is money that can't be spent unless you have an Ordinance from Council. He believes if Council does this and someone retires we could easily transfer money out of the Growth Fund.

Mr. Daum declared the Public Hearing closed at 7:42 p.m.

AUDIENCE ASKING PARTICIPATION: None

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR REGULAR SESSION:

The following are received emails for communication regarding the proposed DORA for the City of Reading:

(1) Dear Reading City Council and Administration,

While the prospect of a DORA coming to Reading has drawn a buzz around town and something many are looking forward to, I understand that we failed, again, to get legislation passed allowing DORA to move forward. While I am not an expert on city laws, I have grown to understand that it was not passed due to a technicality of the DORA map. While I get the need to do things the right way, I also don't understand how this has been in discussion for over a year and when it comes time to vote, we still can't get this across the finish line.

Meanwhile, less than 5 miles away, we have the City of Blue Ash showing us how to get something done. I understand that they have certain advantages that Reading does not. Both administrations and councils are running a city, but they might as

CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
JULY 11, 2023 – 7:30 PM

well be on a different planet when it comes to their ability to push things (both innovative and mundane) forward compared to Reading.

While Reading has discussed and debated a DORA for a number of months, Blue Ash established a DORA at Summit Park last spring in an efficient manner. As a result and a commitment to keeping their residents (and Reading residents) expendable income in Blue Ash, they recently voted to bring Madtree in and acting as a quasi-investor in the new Blue Ash location.

So not only will Blue Ash have had a DORA for over a year, they will also be welcoming in one of the premier breweries in Cincinnati. Could Reading have landed a second Madtree location? Probably not based on what Madtree was looking for. However, it illustrates the point that while Reading hems and haws on technicalities, there are municipalities next door that beat us to the punch every time and take our expendable income while they're at it.

Blue Ash attracted Madtree in part because they gave them a form of financing from the city. When I heard the details, my reaction was that it was innovative, aggressive...and forward thinking. They got a great brewery to come in, which will then also serve as a revenue stream due to the financing agreement for the next 20 years or more. We chase tails for a 2% income tax while they chase innovation to the benefit of their residents.

Reading may pass a DORA (unless, god forbid, another technicality is found) but will it actually be able to produce investment from outside restaurants and breweries that will bring non-bridal district patrons into Reading? I have my doubts.

If Reading had the potential for a deal with Rhinegeist, 50 West, or any other big local breweries like Blue Ash, my prediction would be that it wouldn't even get off the launch pad. The Administration and Council would either panic about not having a grant for it, question as to if we could just use these funds to beef up the new business park even more, cite arcane city codes from the 1980's, or would think that people in the city don't want it (I'm here to tell you that many would love having a brewery come in).

This all goes to say that inaction in Reading creates an opportunity for others. When it comes to actually pursuing investments that the modern family wants-Reading continually fails to get it done.

A DORA will help. I won't argue that. However, it will take more investment directly from the city in attracting the idea breweries and unique restaurant concepts to bring them to Reading. Blue Ash I already covered, but Wyoming is creating a re-envisioned community greenspace, Finneytown/Springfield Township is about to begin a renaissance of sorts, and on I can go. If, and it's a big if, Reading could actually attract a premier brewery or restaurant concept to somewhere on Reading Road (is McCluskey for sale?) then I believe you would see investments come in to re-develop some of the dilapidated properties nearby. This has occurred in countless communities near Reading, and I'm hoping at some point we get to experience the same benefits.

If Reading is to truly rebrand itself in a way that will actually attract young professionals and families that want something more in their community besides a decent school and a moderately priced home, then Council and the Administration will need to seriously reconsider its approach and have a true focus on bringing in the amenities that our current residents want, and that potential residents are demanding.

Or, we can keep getting hung up on technicalities allowing someone to have a mimosa on Benson Street. The choice is ours,

Best Regards, Chris Smith

Comments from Council regarding Chris Smith's email:

Mr. Powell feels that some of Mr. Smith's comments are premature but are also well taken for the need for Economic Development. It is Mr. Powell's belief that it is all of Council's individual responsibilities to take questions seriously, look into them, approach/discuss with the appropriate officials so that when it comes time to have the vote, we can make an informed decision on behalf of the residents. Council will work towards trying to accomplish something in the future in relation to Economic Development.

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
JULY 11, 2023 – 7:30 PM**

Mrs. Eadicicco confirmed that the DORA did pass and is currently under review with the State. She also has confirmation from Economic Development Director, Linda Fitzgerald, that there is interest for future development within the DORA district. Everyone is hopeful that the DORA is the catalyst that will spur development.

Mr. Boehner pointed out that the restaurants and business at Summit Park are heavily incentivized by Blue Ash.

(2) Letter from Carol Antenucci:

I write to you for myself and many other residents who have the same problem I do-FIREWORKS!!! We have suffered through this for years, with many residents starting fireworks between 2 and 3 in the afternoon and continuing non-stop until 1 or 2 in the morning, day after day for a week or more. These are not small ones that I am referring to, but the very large and very loud ones. I understand that Ohio law limits the times for fireworks to certain days and times, which some folks have violated in the extreme, and herein lie some of the problems: residents who have PTSD and have to relive their worst nightmares, newborns and the very young who are frightened by these sudden and loud noises (which means their parents are also kept up all night), the ill and very old who already have trouble sleeping, the thousands who have to get up early to go to work with only 2 or 3 hours sleep, and the countless animals who are terrified. Because of their fear they will not go outside, which poses quite a problem for their owners. Thundershirts and medications work for a while, but you cannot keep them drugged and wrapped up in 90-degree weather for days at a time. All of these issues are imposed on a great portion of our population so that some can make things go boom.

All those of us who fit into at least one category (my family can claim three of them) look to you for help in resolving this with fairness to all residents. With this letter I feel there is ample time to come up with a solution before we have to endure this again next year. Perhaps a notice in several newsletters prior to the 4th reminding everyone of the hours fireworks are allowed, adding a fine to those who break the law, with increasing amounts for second, third, etc offenses that are substantial enough to deter repeaters. I am sure your department would also have many ideas on how to handle this. I look forward to hearing back from you on this issue. Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully, Carol Antenucci

Comments from Council regarding Carol Antenucci's email:

Mrs. Eadicicco stated that after speaking with Police Chief Eden's earlier in the day, he confirmed that while Ohio's laws have changed by legalizing some of the fireworks, Reading's laws have not changed (the state left it up to the municipalities) – fireworks are still not allowed within the city limits. Mrs. Kroeger added that while the Reading Police tries to keep up with it, they're giving people until 11:00 p.m. (considered reasonable time). They do enforce as much as possible.

Motion made by Mr. Boehner to send this topic into Shelly Kroeger's Public Health and Safety committee, seconded by Mr. Powell. Motion passed by voice vote.

Motion to accept and file the communications came from Mrs. Eadicicco, seconded by Mr. Bronner. Motion carried by voice vote.

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

GUEST ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIAL REPORTS:

MAYOR: Robert "Bo" Bemmes: *(No Report, Absent)*

SAFETY/SERVICE DIRECTOR: Patrick Ross: *(No Report, Absent)*

LAW DIRECTOR: Dave Stevenson: *(No Report, Absent)*

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
JULY 11, 2023 – 7:30 PM**

TREASURER: Brenda Owens *(Absent, Report given by Finance Committee Chairman, Andy Bronner)*

**City of Reading
2023 June Income Tax Receipt Summary
With Prior Years Comparison**

Individual Residents Income Taxes

	2020	2021	2022	2023	% Change 22 to 23
January	\$110,812	\$107,429	\$79,333	\$97,988	23.5%
February	\$67,807	\$45,896	\$37,035	\$62,179	67.9%
March	\$89,577	\$127,056	\$131,391	\$121,019	-7.9%
April	\$109,428	\$221,576	\$457,756	\$441,112	-3.6%
May	\$48,987	\$223,455	\$102,421	\$73,161	-28.6%
June	\$99,289	\$134,637	\$107,043	\$117,960	10.2%
July	\$337,009	\$82,544	\$28,939		
August	\$71,990	\$39,361	\$36,571		
September	\$106,778	\$89,782	\$79,408		
October	\$93,081	\$56,061	\$63,966		
November	\$76,487	\$14,763	\$64,047		
December	\$96,708	\$86,298	\$46,897		
Yearly Totals	\$1,307,953	\$1,228,857	\$1,234,807	\$913,418	
YTD Progress	\$525,899	\$860,049	\$914,979	\$913,418	-0.2%

Payroll Withholding Income Taxes

	2020	2021	2022	2023	% Change 22 to 23
January	\$539,671	\$717,952	\$689,143	\$699,906	1.6%
February	\$530,926	\$462,760	\$441,735	\$483,701	9.5%
March	\$419,609	\$413,361	\$434,394	\$477,447	9.9%
April	\$590,089	\$801,135	\$752,396	\$701,491	-6.8%
May	\$453,000	\$490,963	\$534,911	\$480,917	-10.1%
June	\$441,487	\$484,864	\$470,151	\$475,836	1.2%
July	\$433,643	\$507,334	\$501,087		
August	\$519,886	\$566,411	\$591,928		
September	\$392,475	\$411,837	\$464,052		
October	\$449,639	\$549,184	\$606,041		
November	\$483,331	\$545,750	\$493,632		
December	\$429,457	\$432,363	\$462,692		
Yearly Totals	\$5,683,214	\$6,383,913	\$6,442,162	\$3,319,297	
YTD Progress	\$2,974,782	\$3,371,035	\$3,322,729	\$3,319,297	-0.1%

Business Profits Income Taxes

	2020	2021	2022	2023	% Change 22 to 23
January	\$22,258	\$11,981	\$48,907	\$21,712	-55.6%
February	\$18,896	\$58,854	\$24,719	\$17,868	-27.7%
March	\$77,585	\$23,641	\$210,097	\$100,630	-52.1%
April	\$26,014	\$137,747	\$274,272	\$231,557	-15.6%
May	\$21,905	\$60,812	\$42,806	\$12,999	-69.6%
June	\$39,477	\$87,483	\$399,300	\$136,640	-65.8%
July	\$95,430	\$43,735	\$15,804		
August	\$80,398	\$38,207	\$22,399		
September	\$77,959	\$85,263	\$336,599		
October	\$32,831	\$42,542	\$22,564		
November	\$17,874	\$22,412	\$15,798		
December	\$26,952	\$87,159	\$48,456		
Yearly Totals	\$537,579	\$699,835	\$1,461,720	\$521,405	
YTD Progress	\$206,135	\$380,517	\$1,000,100	\$521,405	-47.9%

Total Income Taxes Collected

	2020	2021	2022	2023	% Change 22 to 23
January	\$672,741	\$837,361	\$817,383	\$819,606	0.3%
February	\$617,629	\$567,510	\$503,488	\$563,747	12.0%
March	\$586,771	\$564,058	\$775,881	\$699,095	-9.9%
April	\$725,531	\$1,160,458	\$1,484,424	\$1,374,159	-7.4%
May	\$523,892	\$775,230	\$680,137	\$567,077	-16.6%
June	\$580,253	\$706,984	\$976,494	\$730,436	-25.2%
July	\$866,082	\$633,613	\$545,830		
August	\$672,274	\$643,978	\$650,899		
September	\$577,213	\$586,882	\$880,060		
October	\$575,551	\$647,787	\$692,571		
November	\$577,693	\$582,925	\$573,477		
December	\$553,117	\$605,819	\$558,046		
Yearly Totals	\$7,528,746	\$8,312,605	\$9,138,690	\$4,754,121	
YTD Progress	\$3,706,816	\$4,611,601	\$5,237,807	\$4,754,121	-9.2%

Total Refunds	2020 =	\$132,162	2021 =	\$115,450	2022 =	\$169,800	2023 YTD Refunds =	\$115,160
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Brenda A. Owens- City Treasurer 07/03/2023

AUDITOR: Sabrina Smith: *(No Report, Absent)*

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

FINANCE: Andy Bronner

Finance Committee met on June 20th to review the proposed 2024 budget. After discussion the committee recommended the Budget Ordinance be sent to full Council for review and approval.

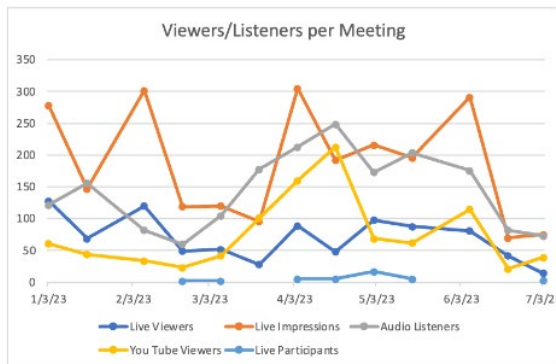
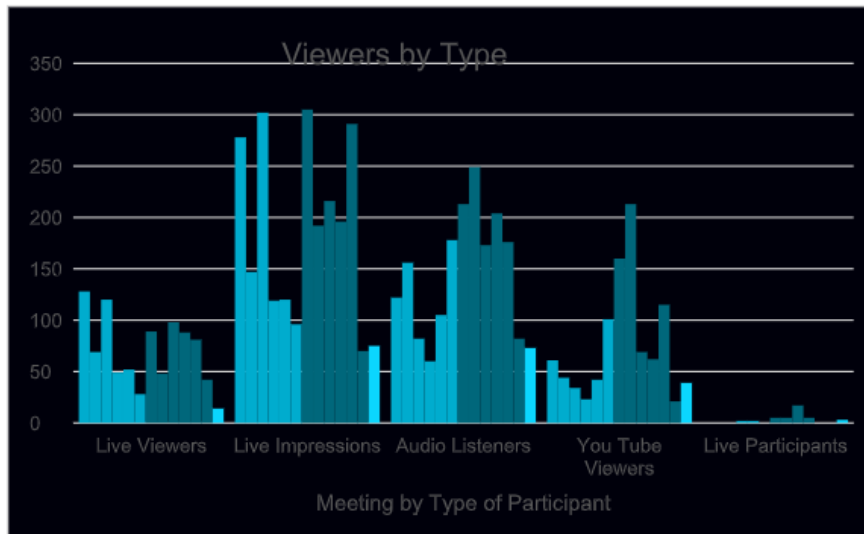
Also, with this being the last year of repayment for the Reading Road streetscape project, approximately \$150,000 will soon be available yearly for repayment of a new capital improvement project loan. This would allow us to borrow approximately \$1 million. Council should prioritize capital needs and commit to moving forward with one or more projects in the coming year.

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
JULY 11, 2023 – 7:30 PM**

UTILITIES, LANDS & BUILDINGS: Mark Bishop

The following statistics on viewership of the City Council meeting from the 2 previous meetings:

Date	1/3/23	1/17/23	2/7/23	2/21/23	3/7/23	3/21/23	4/4/23	4/18/23	5/2/23	5/16/23	6/6/23	6/20/23	7/3/23
Live Viewers	128	69	120	49	52	28	89	48	98	88	81	42	14
Live Impressions	278	147	302	119	120	96	305	192	216	196	291	70	75
Audio Listeners	122	156	82	60	105	178	213	249	173	204	176	82	73
You Tube Viewers	61	44	34	23	42	101	160	213	69	62	115	21	39
Live Participants				2	2		5	5	17	5			3



Reading June 20 and July 3 Meeting Analytics Update

Live unique viewers: **42, 14**

Impressions of live broadcast: **70, 75**

Archived views on YouTube: **21, 39**

Listeners to this meeting on (16) audio podcast platforms: **82, 73**

ZONING, PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT: Dave Powell (No Report)

LAWS & CONTRACTS: Katie Eadicicco (No Report)

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY: Shelly Kroeger

Police Department run count for June, 2023

- Calls for service 1122
- Auto Accidents 20
- Booking Original Charges 97
- Total Criminal Charges **124**

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
JULY 11, 2023 – 7:30 PM**

Citations Issued

• Hamilton County	4
• Arlington Heights	11
• Juvenile	0
• Reading Mayor's	132

Total Citations **149**

Fire Departments run count for March, 2023

• EMS Responses	197
• Fire Responses	54

Total Responses **251**

In the month of June, there were a lot of reports of theft. This is another reminder to lock your cars. There was OVIs, assault, traffic stops with drugs found, juveniles charged with breaking and entering at Sts. Peter and Paul Academy and arrests for domestic violence.

Members of the fire department played chair volleyball with the seniors at the fieldhouse. The Fire Departments golf outing was a huge success. Thanks to everyone for their support.

SERVICE: Bob Boehner

- Furhman road paving project is moving forward. Will have more info next week.

RECREATION: Scott Thamann

We have a couple of events forthcoming at the pool. This Saturday, July 15, will be our Ladies Brunch, from 10:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Attendees can bring a dish to share or pay a \$5 entry fee. Everyone must be 21 and older to attend.

Secondly, on July 22, we will host an Adult Night at the pool, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Bring your own beverages. Non-members will be asked for a \$5 entry fee to attend. Again, you must be 21 or older to attend.

Lastly, on July 28, we will host our Family Fun Night, which is for members only. It will begin at 8:00 pm and run until 9:45. We will have fun games and prizes for the kids. We'd love to have big crowds for all of these fun activities. Please join us.

OTHER BUSINESS: None

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

READING OF RESOLUTIONS:

(1) A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE UPDATE OF THE SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN OF THE HAMILTON COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Resolution was declared a First Reading only.

READING OF ORDINANCES:

(1) THE FOLLOWING BUDGET FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2024 HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY COUNCIL AND IS HEREBY SUBMITTED FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE HAMILTON COUNTY BUDGET COMMISSION. (Second Reading)

Question raised as to whether this is an official first or second reading. To cover all the bases, Mr. Powell made the motion to declare this as a "first reading." Motion was seconded by Mr. Bishop. Motion carried by a 7-0 roll call vote.

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
JULY 11, 2023 – 7:30 PM**

(2) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF READING TO ENTER INTO A NATURAL GAS AGGREGATION AGREEMENT WITH A NATURAL GAS SUPPLIER AS RECOMMENDED BY ENERGY ALLIANCES, INC., PROVIDED THAT THE ACCEPTED AGGREGATION RATE IS BELOW THE CURRENT CONTRACTED RATE AT THE TIME OF EXECUTION, FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 36 MONTHS AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Motion made by Mr. Boehner, seconded by Mr. Thamann to suspend the rule that requires a second and third reading. Motion carried by 6-0 roll call vote (Mr. Bishop recused himself from the vote). Motion made by Mr. Boehner, seconded by Mrs. Kroeger to adopt the ordinance. Motion carried by 6-0 roll call vote (Mr. Bishop recused himself from the vote).

ORDINANCE ADOPTED

ORDINANCE NUMBER 2023-26

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

Bishop: 4th of July Festival went well. We had more recycling than we had trash.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Boehner moved to adjourn. Mr. Bronner seconded. Motion carried by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 pm.

X_____
Carla Kacher
Clerk of Council

X_____
Dwight Daum
President of Council