

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
FEBRUARY 20, 2024 – 7:30 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

President Pro-Tem Mrs. Eadicicco called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Pro-Tem Mrs. Eadicicco 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. Eadicicco. Motion to excuse Mrs. Kroeger made by Mr. Powell, seconded by Mr. Bronner. Motion carried by voice vote.

OTHER CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Mayor Bo Bemmes, Law Director Dave Stevenson & Clerk of Council Carla Albrinck

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion to approve February 6, 2024 (Regular) Council Minutes Meeting made by Mr. Bronner, seconded by Mr. Thamann. Motion carried by voice vote.

Motion made by Mr. Bishop, seconded by Mr. Bronner to move up the Executive Session in the agenda.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Motion made by Mr. Bishop, seconded by Mr. Thamann to enter into Executive Session at 7:32 p.m. for purpose of discussing a new public official. Motion carried by a 6-0 roll call vote.

Motion made by Mr. Boehner, seconded by Mr. Bronner, to come back from Executive Session at 7:47 p.m. Motion carried by voice vote.

AUDIENCE ASKING PARTICIPATION:

Michelle Jones (Hamilton County Public Health Specialist for the Reading We Thrive Team) –

Presented Proclamation to Mayor Bo Bemmes for 7 consecutive years of amazing and excellent service as a WeThrive Community.

Elise Capaccio (Community Navigator) – Updated Council on what they've been doing this year.

www.WeThriveReading.org

Andrew Catt – Asked if the Flege park playground equipment that was recently removed due to vandalism and it being deemed unsafe will be redone. He personally vouched for several of the neighborhood children, as well as his own, who use this park and hopes that new playground equipment will be purchased and reconstructed.

Response from Mayor Bo Bemmes: Yes, there is a plan to replace the playground set.

Discussion among Council as to how to thwart park vandalism after building the next playground set. Lights were mentioned as well as cameras.

Bob Ashbrock (221 Walnut Street):

Spoke to the recently voted upon improvements at Koenig Park in the form of additional field lighting two weeks earlier. Mr. Ashbrock's view is that the matter had not really been discussed previous to that evening's ordinance and vote. This prompted Mr. Ashbrock to review all of the 2022 & 2023 Council Meeting Minutes in which he found no mention of Koenig Park lights needing replacement. Mr. Ashbrock then provided insight into past conversations that were had amongst the previous Council regarding parks within Reading. In 2006 the Army Corps of Engineer came

to Reading and announced a major remapping effort of the 100-year flood plain. They informed us that Koenig Park was 100% in the 100-year flood plain. There are a number of special development conditions (i.e. equipment that would be required). They also shared a graphical illustration of their proposal for the park that would rendered all of the athletic fields within the park totally unusable. That plan was rejected not only by Reading but by the balance of the Mill Creek Valley and never came to fruition. But it started wheels turning because when you've got a community that is being heavily impacted by flood plain mapping changes it necessitates a harder look at the way we do business in the City of Reading, and what we might be able to do to remedy some of those concerns. That prompted an effort to conduct a flood study which was completed in 2017. That study made several recommendations including the creation of flood storage and it specifically mentioned the parks along the creek. In 2014 there was evidence presented to most of us that the Community was likely going to lose 5, public use, Little League Baseball Fields - the 3 at PMC and 2 at Hilltop – were in Jeopardy as the school district was entertaining thoughts of creating new facilities for themselves. In 2014, in an attempt to start an in-depth public conversation about Park needs generally, Mr. Ashbrock presented to Council a series of slides showing many of the deficiencies regarding Koenig Park, some of which would be access problems. We continue to have restrooms at Koenig Park that despite having spent \$30,000.00 recently, they remain non-compliant with regard to ADA access requirements. Other deficiencies in terms of access from a pedestrian point of view – the diagonal parking along Koenig Avenue results in passengers disembarking essentially into the street. There are irregular midblock crosswalk entrance along Mcwhorter Avenue and irregular, poorly marked parking at the end of Mcwhorter. The point Mr. Ashbrock is heading at is that there would seem to be a need for a comprehensive plan before enacting on piecemeal improvements to the Park. That particular point was driven home in a remark made by Patrick Ross, on August 20, 2019, and Mr. Ashbrock asks all of Council to review the video starting at the 1 hour 24 minute mark.

President of Council, Pro-Tem, Mrs. Eadicicco stopped Mr. Ashbrock at this time due to his allotted 5 minute time frame being reached. Motion made by Mr. Bohner, seconded by Mr. Thamann to allow Bob Ashbrock an additional 5 minutes to address Council. Motion carried by voice vote.

Mr. Ashbrock continued - at the August 20, 2019 meeting, Mr. Ross announced an administrative effort to secure a comprehensive Recreation study. That particular effort resulted in a steering committee being impaneled. The steering committee met twice (he pointed out that Mrs. Eadicicco was a participant in this effort) in December 2019 & February 2020. COVID hit in 2020 and Mr. Ashbrock presumes that is the justification for that planning effort to have completely been abandoned, as there is no evidence that it's ever been completed. His point in putting all these things out before Council is that, the effort that Patrick announced in 2019, he specifically described it as one that would be citizen driven, that would review the needs and prioritize. Mr. Ashbrock humbly suggests that Council does just that – embark upon a proper study of the recreational needs. He doesn't see how in a practical sense Council could achieve the installation of that new lighting by any time short of a 6 month interval, which means the utility for the Summer is a marginal value. Mr. Ashbrock urges Council to take a more comprehensive view in which more things can be done in a more coordinated fashion. The absence of the mention of the Koenig lights during the entire 2 year period preceding this Council manic term is interesting, because by comparison, there were 5 mentions of the need for repairing the sidewalk on Hunt Road (the landslide area) which involves public safety. If this push to spend \$300,000.00 on the Koenig lights right now is being motivated by a need to spend COVID money before a deadline, he urges that the sidewalk repair would be an equally worthwhile outlet for those dollars and would not result in Council spending money at Koenig that might end up being done the way Council would want it done long term.

Mayor Bo Bemmes Response: Stated that Mr. Ashbrock is misrepresenting information again. Points made: (1) each and every thing discussed at Council meetings doesn't make the minutes (2) the lights at Koenig are the result of massive Community input over many years. Koenig is used by the VYO (organization keeping 300 boys and girls busy six months a year) who has 1 fundraiser a year that relies on those lights to have a 4 day softball tournament bringing a considerable amount of people to Reading, resulting in funding the VYO. Mr. Bemmes pointed out that just because Mr. Ashbrock has missed hours of comprehensive Community input for this does mean that it does not happen. Speaking to Mr. Ashbrock's view on the Koenig light poles: One of the light poles that has been rooted into

the ground since the 1940s/1950s snapped. The remaining light poles have been tested and determined to be structurally sound, but they're no longer fit, and haven't been for many years for hardball and softball games. With the new lights at Koenig, Little League Baseball, Football & Soccer will all be able to use the fields, and this has been discussed repeatedly at meetings that Mr. Ashbrock failed to attend. It is Mr. Bemmes' view that Mr. Ashbrock's attitude on things is that if he wasn't there, and if it wasn't his idea, and it wasn't done exactly his way, it didn't happen or it's totally wrong.

Bob Ashbrock Response: Meetings that have taken place or that he hasn't attended for which there is no public record, those could very likely be considered a violation of open meetings act.

Katie Eadicicco Response: Focus of the Parks Steering Committee was updates of the swimming pool and Haffey Field House with the idea of either expanding onto that for a Recreation Center/Community Center or expanding onto the pool house in a similar fashion. An entire redo of Koenig Park was never discussed. As far as the sidewalk on Hunt Road, Patrick Ross has met with Engineers and that project is moving forward, but with the weather right now, nothing can be done.

Bob Boehner Response: Pointed out that Mr. Ross mentioned his hopes for getting the sidewalk completed this Summer. He also voted "no" last week on the Koenig Park lights replacement ordinance only because he believes the ordinance should have had 3 readings so there could be more time for public input. He mentioned that he too does not remember a time when the lights at Koenig Park were brought up during a Council Meeting since 2022. Mr. Boehner pointed out that he has been to every committee meeting, some that he was not a member of, and not on the Council floor were the Koenig Park lights brought up. He didn't know anything about it until the 31st of January (2024) when Matt Morgan was in the Finance Committee Meeting talking about them. The next day Mr. Boehner drove down and looked at them and he agrees they need to be replaced. But, it is Mr. Boehner's stance that this was never brought up during Council. They may have been brought up during an administrative meeting, but not during a Council meeting.

Mayor Bo Bemmes Response: Begs to differ, and to prove how far this has gone, mentioned that Reading applied several times to the Cincinnati Reds Community Fund to redo Koenig Park and that Gary Curts made drawings to include the lights. Mr. Bemmes also pointed out that lights at Koenig were part of his State of the City, Mayor's Report.

COMMUNICATIONS: None

GUEST SPEAKER: None Scheduled

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

READING OF RESOLUTIONS: None

READING OF ORDINANCES

(1) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SAFETY-SERVICE DIRECTOR TO ESTABLISH THE POSITION OF PART-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT FOR BOTH THE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. *(Second Reading)*

Ordinance was declared a second reading only.

(2) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SAFETY SERVICE DIRECTOR TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH BRANDSTETTER CARROLL INC. FOR ENGINEERING AQUATIC DESIGN SERVICES FOR READING POOL, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. *(Second Reading)*

Ordinance was declared a second reading only.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

Mr. Bishop (announced for Shelley Kroeger): Public Health and Safety Committee Meeting scheduled for tomorrow, February 21, to discuss the position of part-time Administrative Assistant for both the Police and Fire Department at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

Mayor, Bo Bemmes: We have discussed paving Fuhrman Road (from Ridge Rd. to Sanborn Ct.) for a long time. A couple years ago it is engineered well enough for us to receive \$100,000.00 in Municipal Road funds. We talk about it, we have engineers design it, we talk about, we (Council) award the contract after multiple companies bid on the project, we have preconstruction meetings and then we have a Committee meeting here where citizens are invited as to how we do the project.

Bob Boehner Response: The reason I had the Service Committee Meeting was because Patrick Ross asked if the residents could be notified if they wanted speed humps. The number 2 or number 3 complaint from that meeting was the fact that the last time that road was paved, there was an overlay that was put down without scar find, so it raised the street 3 inches or more. So now the street is higher than the driveway aprons and people are getting tired of replacing their driveway aprons every 4 or 5 years. I let the people know the project's contract has been awarded, we're not going to go back and redo it, we're going to ask about a stop sign up on Georgia Lane because a two weeks supply of the speed trailer uncovered there's a fair amount of people doing 35-45 miles per hour. Mr. Boehner stated that drivers are avoiding Thurnridge Drive and speeding is down on Thurnridge Drive because the speed humps are there. Speed humps are working but its driving traffic to other streets. Mr. Boehner asked Mayor Bo Bemmes if the Engineers could take a look at Fuhrman road to see if it could be ground down 6 inches, and was told no. Mr. Boehner was ok with this response, as he understands the reasoning behind it.

Mayor, Bo Bemmes: Moved on to the subject of speed humps, as they are greatly helping the speeding problem in Reading and it is something he believes needs to be considered as safety officials.

Katie Eadicicco: Suggested that by the next Council meeting it would be a good idea for everyone to get some ideas together about how to use the CBDG (Community Block Development Grant) funds for discussion. Mr. Powell pointed out that the CBDG money can only be spend down in the Valley due to the census tracks and the average income. Mayor Bo Bemmes confirmed that they like it to be in a distressed area financially.

Mayor, Bo Bemmes: Patrick Ross picked up a \$21,000 check (grant dollars) from SORTA today for two road projects – Koehler Avenue and Landy Lane.

Mark Bishop: Pointed out that the City is in a much better position than they were 10-15 years ago, and while we're not going to go wild spending money, it's no longer a situation of we can't do this if we do that. Now we have the ability to do more than one thing and we can do things as they come. They're not always going to fall in the order that we want them to on our priority list, but these days we have the ability to get these things done. Mr. Bishop believes we're doing things well and is optimistic that we're going to get to the rest of the items on the list as soon as it's possible.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn came from Mr. Boehner and was seconded by Mr. Thamman. Motion carried by voice vote. There being no further business, the meeting was declared adjourned at 8:32 pm.

X _____

Carla Albrinck
Clerk of Council

X _____

Katie Eadicicco
President of Council, Pro-Tem