

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**  
Monday – September 14, 2020 – 6:30 P.M.  
Five Points Banquet Room  
360 N. Wilmore, Washington, IL

Mayor Manier called the regular Committee of the Whole meeting of September 14, 2020 to order at 6:30 p.m.

*Present:* Aldermen Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Cobb, Dingledine,  
City Administrator Forsythe, Police Chief McCoy, City Attorney Keith Braskich, and  
City Clerk Brod

*Remotely Present:* Aldermen Stevens and Yoder, Finance Director Baxter, P & D Director Oliphant, City  
Engineer Carr, Public Works Director Schone and City Treasurer Dingledine

*Absent:* None

**MINUTES**

1. *Aldermen wishing to be heard:* None.
2. *Citizens wishing to be heard:* Robin Hahn, of 701 Wellington addressed Business Item D on the agenda. Ms. Hahn shared her frustration while living in the 20<sup>th</sup> Edition of Devonshire in regards to the lack of mowing undeveloped lots. She stated that these zoning violations were reviewed in the August 12, 2019 Public Works Meeting. She sighted minutes from that meeting when it was communicated by the Committee that they did not wish the penalty fee structure to be a source of revenue for the City but instead a motivator for compliance. She sighted City Code, stating fee penalties and city action (a third-party mowing service) in conjunction with a one-time notification was determined to be sufficient. The residents of this neighborhood are asking for the City to enforce compliance with its Code. Citizens wish to continue the fee schedule stated in the City Code and send the message to land owners in violation. She went on to share that at the prior Public Works meeting, Mr. Oliphant shared an occurrence when a third-party mowing service was scheduled to mow the neglected properties, the landowner completed the mowing before the mowing service could address the situation. Ms. Hahn shared her concern that the landowner was being notified of the pending mowing service allowing them to avoid the penalty. Lastly, she expressed her concern with the City's understanding of the amount of undeveloped acreage in the area of concern and the amount of time it would take to complete the mowing. She asked that the City follow through on ordinance enforcement. No additional communications were given or received via email.
3. *Approval of Minutes:* Alderman Cobb moved and Alderman Brownfield seconded to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2020 Committee of the Whole meeting. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.
4. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
  - A. Chamber of Commerce Update – Chamber Executive Director Chevie Kriete provided that members of the Committee received the WCOC Snapshot, highlighting current Chamber information. She shared that they are planning a Taste of Washington during the month of October. It will be held by visiting individual restaurants and will include a People's Choice Award winner.
  - B. ADA Transition Plan 2020 – City Engineer, Dennis Carr shared, upon hire, he discovered an ADA Plan that was started but not finished by the previous engineer. He is now presenting a new plan for review addressing public right-of-ways and sidewalks. Mr. Carr stated that there is a report addressing sidewalk and ramp issues throughout the city and that this transition plan is required by law. This will help the City become ADA compliant. Mr. Carr stated, the City has over 850 ramps and around 95% are likely not compliant. Committee member Dingledine asked for clarification on when Illinois changed the specifications of the ramps. Mr. Carr answered that it wasn't long ago that we put in a lot of new ramps and

now we are required to change them to meet the new guidelines resulting in a large expense. He went on to explain that the old guide required a 3-foot wide ramp and the new requirement is 4 feet wide.

- C. Quadrennial Wage Evaluation: Aldermen, Mayor, City Clerk, Treasurer: City Administrator, Ray Forsythe provided the report stating that the Wage Evaluation process takes place every four years and it takes place no less than 180 days before the term of office. Mr. Forsythe shared that the Alderman are compensated per meeting and the last change was eight years ago. The Mayor's salary was also last changed eight years ago and includes an additional \$100 for each Liquor Commission Hearing. The City Clerk's salary currently has an annual increase of 3.5% per year, over the last eight years due to this being the only elected position that works 40 hours or more per week. He also shared that the Treasurer's salary saw an increase with the previous Ordinance, and clarified that if no action is taken at this time, the current salaries will freeze for the next four years. Mr. Forsythe went on to share that he compared our community with others that were similar, including the Union Contracts. Some differences were found including; if the other cities had an Administrator, our council is paid per meeting instead of a lump sum, other City Clerks only take minutes, Treasurer's salaries range depending how many hours and our Treasurer provides internal controls, working closely with our Finance Director and City staff. Mr. Forsythe shared that the Treasurer and Mayor both stated that they are not interested in a salary increase at this time and opened the conversation to feedback from the Committee. Committee member Dingledine shared the 3.5% increase for the City Clerk was put in place to raise the salary comparable to other fulltime staff at City Hall and expressed the desire to reevaluate the percentage going forward. Committee member Stevens asked if the City Clerk would be the only position to receive an increase every year if the Ordinance were approved as written and the current salary would stay the same if not approved. Mr. Forsythe and the Mayor confirmed. No other comments or question were presented and Mr. Forsythe offered to bring the report to the Finance and Personnel Committee. Committee member Butler stated the Council salary is competitive with other cities.
- D. City Mowing Nuisance Violation Procedures: Planning and Development Director, Jon Oliphant shared that they are looking for feedback if changes are needed in addition to Chapter 96 of the State Code which states only one violation notice is required. Jon clarifies that the City uses a contracted third-party mower who has other obligations, sometimes it can take up to a week for the nuisance property to get mowed, not a week to mow the property. Mr. Oliphant offered to look into obtaining multiple third-party mowers to help lessen the time to get on a mowing schedule. He went on to share that the City has explored other community's language notifying residents annually, by a community notification, of the one time per year notice policy regarding an offence, not one time per offence. Mr. Oliphant continued by sharing that part of the difficulty lies in determining an exact height when grass height can vary on one property and it is somewhat subjective when the vast majority of the property could be compliant. He suggested reevaluating the language to assure the entire property doesn't have to be mowed if only a portion exceeds height. The Mayor acknowledged that some offenders may push the current notification system, slowing down the response. He agreed that the language could be made more clear and better time frames can be communicated. Mr. Forsythe shared the challenge of the lack of staff to drive around looking for violations and wondered if the Council should consider a Nuisance Abatement officer to look for issues. Committee member Stevens stated that the idea is good but we need to pay attention to citizen complaints. Ms. Stevens shared that she called the City many times on the property mentioned and the City needs to address the code violation when the complaint is made. Mayor stated that the City hasn't neglected the complaints however, the City has tried to be nice and give a few extra days to address the issue. He went on to share that in a small community we want to trust everyone however, those days may be gone. Treasurer, Ellen Dingledine provided for consideration, in other communities, if a third-party mower is needed, the community charges an administration fee in addition to the mowing fee to cover time and expenses to address and follow-up on each complaint. She reminds the Committee that there is a large amount of administration time over and above the money spent on the mowing service. Committee member Adams shared the need for fine enforcement, even if the owner mows between time of being notified and the mowing. Committee member Dingledine shared that we have the penalty and need to enforce it. He shared that the homeowner needs to be responsible and a compliance officer is not necessarily needed. Committee member Blundy agrees that a compliance officer is not needed, stating it would be more constructive to enforce the fine as soon as the notice is issued. Discussion proceeded with several Committee members agreeing that no compliance officer is needed but following the fine structure and enforcing the Code will be the best solution. Mr. Cobb, and the Mayor agreed with Mr. Brownfield that the language can be made clear as to the height and percentage of the lots in question. Committee member Adams shared that he drove out to evaluate at the properties in question and understands the resident's concerns. Mr. Dingledine suggested using registered mail to know exactly when the nuisance fines start. Mr. Butler and Mr. Oliphant discussed how the land owner may have known to mow before the fine started, the answer was undetermined. Mr. Butler offered the solution of

putting the nuisance lots on a mowing schedule and sending the owner the bill, due to the length of time addressing this issue.

- E. Storm Water Management: Planning and Development Director, Jon Oliphant provided information regarding storm water issues in Washington Estates occurring during flash flooding events. The City wishes to explore the need for a funding mechanism pertaining to this issue. The Committee was provided a packet showing all the areas of flooding concern throughout the City. Due to similarities, research was done using the towns of Eureka and Morton as examples of their storm water utilities and assessments associated with improvements. City Engineer, Dennis Carr provided that a study has been started evaluating the effects of a rain event in Washington Estates. He shared the costs involved for the improvements and noted that without a funding mechanism, the financial burden is put solely on the residents. The costs exceed a simple drainage project and turn into a capital improvement project and City priorities would need to be considered. Utilities Superintendent, Brian Rittenhouse shared several projects that they work on on an annual basis. He shared his evaluation of ditches, inlets, outfalls, catch basins and underground storm pipes that need to be maintained. Mr. Forsythe provided that the only funding sources to address stormwater are the property and sales taxes. Committee member Stevens stated that the issue in Washington Estates is private property and the City should not do projects on private property. She stated that the City needs to keep up with Code enforcement concerning keeping the water ways clean. Committee member Brownfield shared that although he feels for the homeowners affected by this issue, he doesn't feel comfortable taxing all residents for this cost. Committee member Yoder agreed that the City should research other funding sources and feels there may be room in the budget to compensate for the remainder. Mr. Cobb suggested continuing to apply for grants through FEMA and IEMA to fund some of these projects. He asks Mr. Carr to clarify the preliminary budget of \$400,000 for portion under road and asked if this can be discussed when IDOT resurfaces business Route 24. Mr. Cobb also asked to clarify the 40 properties with \$10,000 easement each at which Mr. Carr shared that this is to allow the City access to do the work on that property and that all homeowners would have to agree to easement. The Mayor acknowledged that improvements were made after the tornado that may have helped the waterway somewhat. After a brief discussion, most Committee members agreed that there is little interest in moving forward with a tax to generate the funding needed. Additional consideration will be made going forward.
5. Other Business: Committee member Stevens brought forward the budget for Zinser Place. She noted we have \$300,000 in this year's budget earmarked for Brunk's Alley Improvement, Zinser Place and Brick Streets Water and Sewer and asked for clarification on the timing of the projects. The Mayor shared that this has been sitting in the budget for several years to keep a fund in case the street needs to be replaced. He went on to share that the first block of Zinser was replaced about ten years ago as well as the City parking lot. The Mayor also shared that the rest of Zinser is in poor shape and may need to be considered for replacement. Mr. Forsythe shared the challenge that there is money earmarked in the TIF Fund but not in the General Fund. Ms. Stevens asked for clarification on the fire department contract mentioned by Kevin Byrd. The Mayor shared that they have had a meeting and more information will be brought to the next Public Safety and Finance and Personnel meetings. Police Chief, Mike McCoy reminded residents to lock their cars as three cars were stolen last week. He also stated to close garage doors and lock houses. The Mayor asked everyone to use social media to remind residents to lock cars.
6. Adjournment: At 7:44 p.m. Alderman Cobb moved and Alderman Adams seconded to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

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Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk