

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Monday – December 14, 2020 – 6:30 P.M.

Remote Meeting

301 Walnut Street, Washington, IL

Mayor Manier called the regular Committee of the Whole meeting of December 14, 2020 to order at 6:36 p.m.

*Present (remotely):* Aldermen Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Cobb, Dingledine, Stevens and Yoder  
(Note: Alderman Dingledine experienced audio issues affecting his ability to provide input)

*Also Present:* City Administrator Forsythe, Finance Director Baxter, P & D Director Oliphant, City Engineer Carr, Public Works Director Schone, City Treasurer Dingledine, City Clerk Brod, Police Chief McCoy, Deputy Police Chief Stevens, Attorney Derek Schryer, Washington Chamber of Commerce Representative Kristy Howell

*Absent:* None

### MINUTES

1. *Aldermen wishing to be heard:* None at this time
2. *Citizens wishing to be heard:* City Clerk Brod stated that no public comments were received.
3. *Approval of Minutes:* Alderman Cobb moved and Alderman Adams seconded to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2020 Committee of the Whole meeting. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.
4. BUSINESS ITEMS

A. Chamber of Commerce Update: Chamber representative, Kristy Howell presented the monthly report for the Chamber. Ms. Howell shared that it's been a quiet month but the Chamber is still trying to support business as small boutiques are still open but catering and some restaurants are closed due to State mandates. Ms. Howell shared a new Chamber event called the Carryout Challenge which will take place December 15<sup>th</sup> thru 17<sup>th</sup>. This event challenges people to support local restaurants and other local Chambers are doing a similar event as well. Ms. Howell shared that the Chamber continues to promote the purchase of Chamber Bucks and they have been popular. She shared that the Park District and Chamber have limited hours so they are providing curbside pickup when needed. Ms. Howell shared that the Mayor's Breakfast had a good online turnout of about 750 participants. She also shared that the Holiday themed ads have been receiving good reviews. Alderman Stevens asked if the Chamber keeps a record of how many businesses apply for state funding. Ms. Howell provided that the applications are submitted independently and the Chamber is not involved in the process. She went on to share that the Chamber monitors when award winners are announced. Ms. Howell shared that most downstate business who have received awards from BIG have not yet received any award money and in many cases the Chamber and businesses have submitted documents only to keep receiving requests for more of the same documents to be resubmitted. She shared that it's frustrating. Ms. Howell shared that the Chamber will help connect people and businesses but they are not involved with application process. Alderman Stevens asked if Chamber members share when they apply and receive funds. Ms. Howell stated that most of the downstate is run through Chris Setti and the Chamber is not allowed to call on behalf of the business. She stated that the Chamber is keeping track of who has received the awards and that this

information is public knowledge. Alderman Stevens stated that she did not know where to look for the information and Ms. Howell replied that there are websites that she uses to monitor the winners and she will share the information to her. Planning and Zoning Director, Jon Oliphant shared that there were two different rounds of announcements, the first in late May to early June, then again in mid to late July. Those that were awarded at that time have only started to hear that DCO is going to cut checks within the next two weeks. These checks should make it to business within the next month. Ms. Howell shared that the Village of Morton applied for a grant from Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity in order to provide grants to certain business types in the Village of Morton. Mayor Manier shared that Washington had applied for this same grant. Mr. Oliphant shared that we just received notice of the state award today. Ms. Howell asked who can apply for the grant and Mr. Oliphant shared that it is open to restaurants, bars, caterers and bakeries. Ms. Howell clarified that the Chamber is not eligible to apply for the grant and Mr. Oliphant confirmed.

- B. COVID Assistance Options for Washington Businesses During Tier 3 Mitigations: City Administrator, Ray Forsythe introduced Mr. Oliphant to provided details concerning the assistance options. Mr. Oliphant shared that the City applied for DCO's Economic Support Program for funds to be used by bakeries, caterers, restaurants and bars. The funds can be used to reimburse occupancy and/or utilities that were incurred between March and November 2020 and businesses need to be able show at least a 25% reduction in sales or revenue during said time period. Awarded funds must be spent by January 31, 2021 with applications due December 30, 2020. Mr. Oliphant also shared that letters were sent to all eligible Washington business around Thanksgiving, letting them know that this opportunity might occur allowing them time to gather necessary information. Mayor Manier asked how many people have applied, Mr. Oliphant replied that 32 business were identified, six have replied, three have applied, two declined, and one business felt that they have done well and didn't apply so other business may use the award money. Alderman Stevens stated that she didn't know that the City could choose the categories and asked Mr. Oliphant why he chose the four specific categories as opposed to the categories that Morton chose. Mr. Oliphant replied it was done through consultation with Peoria and Peoria Heights who also received this grant, the GPDC, knowing that there are limited funds in the program, and knowing there had to be some limits due to the amount of funds available. The City chose to target businesses that might be the hardest hit but still be able to meet the quick turnaround. Alderman Stevens asked if Mr. Oliphant was surprised that some businesses have not suffered the revenue loss. Mr. Oliphant shared that some restaurants have done relatively well and were able to transition easily, while others were not equipped as well to make it work. Mr. Oliphant stated that he hopes to receive many applications as this grant does not contain a lot of red tape. Alderman Stevens asked how much was awarded with this grant. Mr. Oliphant replied \$160,400. Alderman Brownfield asked if there isn't a lot of interest from these specified businesses, can more business categories be added. Mr. Oliphant shared that he has been in contact with DCO regarding more money that can be awarded to businesses for expenses above the initial \$5,000 maximum award. He also shared that the DCO representative will get back to him whether more money can be offered to each of the local business. Mayor Manier stated that there are 177 businesses in Washington that have been awarded \$2,100,000 and feels moving forward with this grant will be successful. Mr. Forsythe shared that PPE loans and grants have awarded over \$9,000,000 to area businesses. Mayor Manier shared that on October 19, 2020, the City met with 6-7 businesses, along with the Chamber to talk about local marketing and it was determined that they will wait until the end of the year. Now, they are concerned about January and February, once the holiday shopping is done and the possible sales slump that may occur. He stated that the City will continue to work with the Chamber to help promote and market local businesses. Mr. Forsythe stated that some general Facebook and Google ads have started which promote Washington as a great place to live and shop. Alderman Stevens asked if the Economic Development Commission has met since June and asked why they haven't met. Mr. Forsythe shared that COVID has made it

hard to add another commission. Mayor Manier shared that three new businesses have opened since the shut-down began. Alderman Stevens shared that the EDC was just starting to talk about their role.

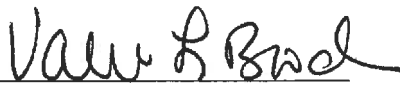
- C. Cable Television Franchise Agreement with Comcast Consideration: City Administrator, Ray Forsythe introduced Attorney, Derek Schryer who shared that the Comcast Franchise Agreement expires this December 20, 2020. Mr. Schryer shared that they are creating a standardized document that would allow the City to be treated similar to the MTCO Agreement. The previous agreement included a public access TV channel which is a right for the City to have however, after reviewing this with staff, it would be easier to put information on the City website instead of having a dedicated public access channel. Mr. Schryer would like to bring the finalized agreement to the December 21, 2020 Council meeting with advice to waive the 1<sup>st</sup> reading. Mr. Schryer asked if we don't hear back from Comcast, would Council want to extend our current agreement for 30 days allowing time to finalize the documents. Alderman Cobb asked if the City asks for the extension or does Comcast ask for the extension. Mr. Schryer replied that this issue is more on them, but we need a clear contract. Mr. Schryer suggested that if the agreement is not finalized in the next 48 hours, we should ask for an extension. Alderman Cobb agreed. Alderman Stevens asked if the public access channel was an additional charge. Mr. Schryer replied that it is not but would need a 108-day lead-time to make the infrastructure ready for the channel to go live. Mr. Schryer shared that it is then the responsibility of the City to fill the channel space and that we only have about two hours of meetings each week to fill the space. Mr. Forsythe shared knowing from previous experience, there is a challenge to finding content to fill channel time and this only provides the channel but not technical support or materials for the channel space. The City would then have to provide materials for 24/7 coverage with no budget or mechanisms to create work and our normal meetings would not fill the space. Mr. Forsythe went on to share that there are no means provided to receive feedback to see if anyone is actual watching and there is no City staff to work on a cable access channel. Alderman Stevens stated that in East Peoria there is a public access channel in the City and schools with information and music. Alderman Stevens stated that she doesn't feel that we need it but that we need a platform for Council meeting videos because our website's last video is from July 6th and we should work with other entities in our community but it doesn't sound like staff would want to reach out to the school districts and this is the first time she has heard about Washington being able to have a public access channel. Mr. Schryer thinks the public access channel is somewhat of a relic and was put into effect when cable television became wide-spread in the 1980s. He went on to share that now that technology has evolved, it is much easier to post content to the website than to provide staff to manage the channel and consideration should be given as to the best use of city resources as well as the amount of people are leaving cable television services. Mr. Forsythe shared that this section was left in the contract as a place holder in the event that it can be made to work in the future. Alderman Adams recalled a channel from a while ago, that had a local news broadcast manned by the high school but now it might be better to use a platform that can stream content. Mr. Forsythe shared that a public hearing is scheduled for Monday, December 21 at 6:15pm with the Council meeting immediately following and the draft is posted in the paper and on the City website. He also stated that he would take Alderman Cobbs lead and see if we can get an extension.
- D. Laser Electric Light Consideration: Public Works Director, Kevin Schone experienced audio issues and asked City Engineer, Dennis Carr to provide the details including that staff had been approached to improve the lighting at intersections. Mr. Carr stated that Laser Electric had completed work at BUS RT24/Cummings in May of 2019. He also shared that any new fixtures installed can be spared during the BUS RT24 upgrades. The following intersections are under consideration: RT8/Summit, RT8/School, RT8/McCluggage, RT24/Freedom Parkway, RT24/Centennial, RT24/Wilmor, and RT24/Cummings. They included pricing for eight City owned

lights on Freedom Parkway that are now part of the IDOT plan. The proposed cost is \$17,766. The City had budgeted \$103,805.

- E. West Roof Replacement: City Engineer, Dennis Carr provided the details that staff had budgeted \$60,000 to repair the roof of the East Street Department building. The bids that were received were under budget allowing extra funds to be considered for the West Street Department roof. Morton Buildings provided an estimate that would allow both buildings together to remain under budget. Alderman Brownfield clarified that this would be a building that the Police Department would be interested in. Mr. Forsythe stated that we will retain ownership of the building for the foreseeable future. Most of the Alderman stated that they agreed to move forward with this project.
- F. Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget Memo and Schedule: City Administrator, Ray Forsythe shared that the Council and Department Directors had received the Levy details and Budget Overview. He stated that the Levy is about \$1.7 million and the balance for operations will have to come from other funds. He shared that this is the first year using the Tyler Software and Council will be trained on the software so they can access draft budgets and other information remotely. He went on to share that starting in January, Department Directors will provide a scope of their budgets and provide a preview of any larger projects and review any staffing changes. Mr. Forsythe shared that the schedule is attached as the last page of the memo and introduced Finance Director, Joannie Baxter who shared that they will provide revenue updates next week and provide updates monthly. She shared in January we would like to have individual assessments at the committee level as well as projections from Finance and Personnel. Mr. Forsythe shared that there will be an additional revenue source for the City coming from large businesses who sell online. Businesses will be required to collect local home-rule sales tax, but we won't receive them until three months later. He went on to share that we don't anticipate guidance from the Municipal League because each municipality is different. He reminded that it will provide another revenue source but we will not be able to predict amounts for a while. Mr. Forsythe shared that we have been lucky so far with revenues and we have been conservative with our spending. Alderman Dingledine asked about the percentage that we will get from online sales. Mr. Forsythe shared that online sales have to collect 100% of the local option sales tax which is 2.25% from online sales. Now we will get it from large retailers such as Walmart, Menards and Amazon when online orders are placed. It is for larger retailers who generate over \$200,000 in sales in Illinois.
- G. Relief to On-Premise Liquor Licensees for Continued Operation Resolution Consideration: Mayor Manier explained that the City had received a letter from a local business owner who maintains a BYOB liquor license but was not able to utilize it this year due to the COVID shut-down. Mayor Manier stated that he shared the letter with Police Chief, Mike McCoy and Deputy Chief, Jeff Stevens who all felt that smaller establishments may need help. Mayor Manier shared that the idea was brought up to waive license fees for next year so the businesses would be encouraged to stay open. Mr. Forsythe shared that the State of Illinois has waived their license fees. Alderman Adams, Alderman Brownfield, and Alderman Cobb stated that they agree and this is a good way to support our local businesses that have been impacted by the shut-down. Mayor Manier introduced Chief McCoy who provided that even a small amount could help the business and it will cost the City less than \$20,000. Alderman Stevens asked how business will be notified. Mayor Manier replied that a letter will be sent to the licensees stating that if the business is in good standing on April 30<sup>th</sup>, the fee will be waived. Mr. Forsythe shared that the City Clerk will send out a letter using the same process as usual renewals only it won't include the fee. Alderman Stevens asked when the Liquor Commission meeting took place. Mayor Manier stated that as Liquor Commissioner, he called the Chief and Deputy Chief to present the idea to Council.

5. *Other Business:* None

6. *Adjournment:* At 7:25 p.m. Alderman Cobb moved and Alderman Brownfield seconded to adjourn.  
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

  
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Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk