



Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 14, 2024, at 6:30 P.M.

Wilmor Fire Station, 200 N. Wilmor Road, Washington, IL 61571

Mayor Manier called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., in the training room with a quorum present.

Present: Alderpersons Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith and Stevens

Also Present: Planning & Development Director Oliphant, City Engineer Carr, Finance Director Baxter, Public Works Director Rittenhouse, Police Chief McCoy, City Treasurer Carol Crocker, City Clerk Brod, Attorney Derek Schryer, Building and Zoning Coordinator Boyer, Press

1. ALDERPERSONS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Alderperson Stevens commented regarding previous minutes that state that she shared concern for not knowing policy. She has since found policy statements in the old Code of Ordinances book at City Hall, when she was comparing the previous code with the new proposed code. She then thanked the fire department for their open house.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD: None provided.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Alderperson Smith motioned to accept the September 9, 2024, minutes; Alderperson McIntyre seconded. Passed by voice vote.

3. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. *Washington Fire Department Contract Discussion* – Chief McCoy shared that Mayor Manier and Alderperson Adams met with Mr. Longfellow and Mr. Labuz from the fire department. They provided a proposed contract running from October 14, 2024 to April 30, 2027. Mr. Labuz from Fire Board shared that negotiations were smooth and their one big ask is a ladder truck for \$2.5 million. They asked to split the cost with the City. They hope the Council can decide by the end of the month because the price increases every quarter. Mr. Labuz clarified that the cost difference between the 2020 contract versus the 2024 contract is due to not paying a full-time fire chief right now. Chief McCoy shared that some previous language was negotiated out of the new contract. Alderperson Stevens asked about a presentation tonight and the fire department said it will be at a later date. Alderperson Martin clarified that the current ladder truck is a 1996 Pierce truck. Mayor Manier asked if everyone was comfortable moving forward and no objections were given. Mayor Manier thanked the negotiating team.
- B. *Community Solar Program Discussion* – P&D Director Oliphant shared that this could save the City about \$40,000 per year over the course of 20 years. Representatives from Good Energy and Ampion were present and explained that this is a similar plan as Peoria's who will become a partner in order to save about 10%. Ampion provides the services and most of the projects are known as community solar projects. The benefits go to the community to provide a cost savings. This program identified a project in Galva with the same terms that we were seeking. The Galva project won't initially be enough to cover the full load, but it is a substantial start and they will notify us when another contract with same terms becomes available. He explained that the program works by assigning the City a share in one of the projects. That project then generates power that goes to the grid and the power is tracked and transferred into monetary credit that will reduce the amount owed to the utility. Alderperson Martin asked to clarify who pays for the 10% discount or if the power company or state receives 10% less. They explained that it is a discount, not money lost. The Galva solar project is owned by Navisun, and Ampion is the solar administrator. Alderperson Butler discussed billing and asked if this is for the City or residents. They noted this could be offered to residents as well, but that is a separate program. It was noted that the contracts are usually 10-20 years, and this one is a seven-year agreement with an option to cancel after one year. Alderperson Stevens said Good Energy recommended this community solar option for City owned facilities and asked if this is for areas who can't provide their own solar power. She feels Galva is making money from them selling it to us. It was noted that the City could choose to do an RFP to bring a company in and install solar. They noted that Galva doesn't own it, it is leased. The representatives noted that the City could reduce our solar usage if we do our own solar energy on buildings. Regarding meters, Alderperson Butler asked about the meters in the City and Public Works Director Rittenhouse shared that the wastewater and treatment plants use the most energy. Engineer Carr shared that there is not a lot of room at the facilities for an array. He noted that Legion Road is the only site that can support it. Alderperson Blundy clarified that we could opt out after 12 months, but we would need 12-month notice. Alderperson Blundy noted the increasing cost of energy rates and requested that language be included regarding guaranteed savings in case they lose power. They noted that the savings follow a solar cycle with the seasons. It was noted that longer terms do not mean better rates. Alderperson Blundy suggested putting a solar farm on the 223 property. Alderperson Martin asked if we have to purchase a certain amount of credits and they explained that they are trying to get the largest subscription that we can support. Ampion receives a fee for managing the project with the project owner. Alderperson McIntyre noted summer is the highest amount of sun and wondered if it is redistributed to winter months. The representative shared that it carries over with a goal to go year-round. They want to work with Washington because of our good financial standing. Alderperson Brownfield appreciates the information,

trusts staff and would like to move forward. Alderperson Stevens appreciates the information but noted the Illinois Shines program. She feels we could have our own solar farm. Alderperson Adams agreed with Alderperson Brownfield. Alderperson Martin wants to know more about the scope of the Galva project and about Navisun. He is not in favor of using fertile farm ground or timberland for solar arrays. Engineer Carr noted what properties are used in Galva. Alderperson McIntyre doesn't feel we are in the market to build our own solar and supports moving forward with this. Alderperson Blundy appreciated the option to opt out if needed and would like to entertain other offers and investigate our own solar farm. Alderperson Butler doesn't see a risk but wants to see other opportunities. Alderperson Smith would like to try it for the 12 months and see what the savings might be.

- C. *114 Walnut Street Fire Escape Update* – P&D Director Oliphant shared that Council placed this agenda item. He shared that the previous wood fire escape was removed and replaced with new temporary wood fire escape while a permanent escape is planned. He noted that the building's owner and the developer do not agree. The City has adopted the 2018 International Residential Code and the 2018 International Building Code and there is concern with how this building will be classified. There is a private agreement between the developer and property owner and the City is not involved with the enforcement of it. He shared that Ameren put meters on the east side of the building, close to the fire escape landing and they cannot be moved due to proximity to other utilities. Alderperson Smith stated that the old fire escape was on June 30, 2023 and 7-8 months later the temporary fire escape was installed. Alderperson Smith noted the property is zoned C-2, General Commercial and expressed concern for changing the status of the building. P&D Director Oliphant shared that zoning does not play a role in meeting the code, noting that most buildings near the area are zoned C-2 which has a variety of uses. The issue is comparing the IRC and IDC; she could fall under the IRC which allows for five units and owner occupied. Building and Zoning Coordinator Joe Boyer further explained that there is a disconnect between zoning and occupancy similar to the Empire State Building, which is zoned commercial, but it is residentially occupied. He noted that Marlene's business is on the first floor but most of the building is used for dwellings. Mr. Boyer also shared that a photo taken on December 18, 2023 shows a portion of the fire escape, which was later removed and replaced with wooden steps on February 19, 2024. Mr. Boyer shared his concern for the condition of the previous fire escape and shared that he wanted to provide something better for the owner that provided temporary egress. Alderperson Blundy asked about exceptions. P&D Director Oliphant shared that they consult the International Building Code first which contains exceptions for the International Residential Code to be the prevailing code. P&D Director Oliphant shared that opinions vary regarding the exceptions and ultimately the architect has to put their stamp on it. P&D Director Oliphant shared that if all entities don't agree, the City might have to judge. Alderperson Blundy would prefer not to choose a side. P&D Director Oliphant agreed. Alderperson Martin feels a steel escape should be provided if it is in the contract. Alderperson McIntyre emphasized life safety and hopes they can work it out.
- D. *Discussion of Ordinance Regulating Public Camping* – Police Chief McCoy explained that this is a problem in some communities and IML provided the model ordinance. He presented the ordinance with a change to remove the requirement for people to work off their fines. He would like to bring it to the next meeting for consideration. Alderperson Smith and Chief McCoy clarified that we don't have a large problem with this. Chief McCoy noted that we have resources for these issues. Mayor Manier shared that someone living in their car was offered assistance with housing, but refused it. Chief McCoy shared that the Township has a fund for assistance. Alderperson Blundy asked to clarify that this addresses homelessness, not someone who wants to put up a tent in a park. He does not favor fines. Chief McCoy feels without this we don't have the ability to do anything. Chief McCoy hopes the fines will deter people from doing it. Alderperson Blundy doesn't feel we need to do this now because we don't have an issue. Alderperson Stevens would like to be proactive and have a policy so the police department knows what steps to take. She feels an ordinance needs to be in place for people who will not accept help. Alderperson McIntyre feels we need to be proactive and knows that officers already use resources. Mayor Manier noted that compliance is more important than fines. Alderperson Martin favors it and trusts the police. He noted that there is a difference between falling asleep on a bench versus sleeping on a bench. Alderperson Butler doesn't want to wait for the problem to happen. Alderpersons Adams and Brownfield also favor it. Alderperson Blundy asked if we can add policy language. Chief McCoy noted that different procedures are needed for different individuals. Engineer Carr asked if the City Attorney interprets section 10H to mean that if a person packs up and leaves, they will not be fined. Attorney Schryer read aloud 10H agreed with Mr. Carr's interpretation.
- E. *Speed Limit Discussion – Freedom Parkway, Dallas Road, N. Cummings Lane, W. Cruger Road* – Engineer Carr shared that Freedom Parkway is opening tomorrow and it was designed to be 40 mph. Staff recommends the straight-aways remain at 40 mph then reduce to 30 mph on the bend for safety reasons. They agree with IDOT's assessment that the new Dallas Road (previous Nofsinger realignment) from Cruger to the bypass be posted at 35 mph. Mr. Carr shared the varying speeds on N. Cummings Lane and with the installation of the new signal and commercial development, staff recommends adjusting the speed limit for the entirety of the road to 35 mph. The speed limit for Dallas Road between Newcastle Road on the south and the corporate limits of the City on the north is 30 mph. This ordinance should be adjusted to change the northern boundary of the 30-mph zone to W. Cruger Road. Finally, City staff feels that a speed limit of 40 mph would be safer, on W. Cruger Road given the installation of a new 4-way stop controlled intersection at Dallas Road. Police Chief McCoy agreed with the recommendations. He feels this will help clear up problems, especially around Dallas. Alderperson Stevens supports the staff's opinions. Alderperson Butler wants to make certain that we are not obligated to have a certain speed limit to receive funds from IDOT or invalidate any agreements. Engineer Carr shared that this will match IDOT agreements. Alderperson Blundy doesn't agree with changes to Cruger and wonders if we need the 4-way stop at Dallas and Cruger. Engineer Carr clarified that the new stop is per IDOT standards, noting that the road will go from two different intersections to one intersection. He favors the other speed limits. Alderperson Stevens asked if the speed would change at Dallas and Newcastle. Engineer Carr will check if there is a speed zone sign there for the school.

- F. *2025 223 Property Farm Lease Update Discussion* – P&D Director Oliphant shared that Council has approved agreements with Mr. Vercler since 2018. This agreement was for one year with two additional one-year options. Mr. Vercler would like to cap the total rent payment between \$340/acre to \$412/acre. While the yields for soybeans have been near record levels, this will allow for impactful market conditions. Alderperson McIntyre favors moving forward. No opposition was provided.
- G. *Residential Cemeteries Prohibition Consideration* – P&D Director Oliphant shared that a resident has asked if he can be buried in his backyard. He noted that our code is only specific to Glendale Cemetery. The zoning code allows for cemeteries to provide a location approved by resolution by the City Council after a public hearing is held and recommendation by PZC is obtained. This language is similar to special use language. P&D Director Oliphant noted this is the first time this has been asked and chances are that neighbors would not support this. Alderperson Blundy is in favor of prohibiting this. P&D Director Oliphant looked into the county health department, but they leave it to the municipality to regulate it. Alderperson Adams supports prohibiting burials on residential properties. Mayor Manier asked if anyone is interested and no response was provided.
- H. *Phase 2B Trunkline Compromise Engineering Discussion* – Engineer Carr shared that this is an engineering agreement with Strand. The property owners asked what kind of damage or disturbance could take place on their properties. Strand put together a scope which includes a site visit, how to get the drill rig in, and drilling a bore hole. Staff would like direction on bringing it to Council next week. This will allow Strand to get started so we don't stop forward progress. Alderpersons Adams, Smith, Stevens, Brownfield and McIntyre favor moving forward.

OTHER BUSINESS: Alderperson Stevens asked about how the solar situation started. She would like to be told if an idea is being discussed at City Hall and is coming forward. She asked if staff compared other solar providers. Alderperson Stevens asked about the use of Code Red and who is responsible for it. Regarding solar, P&D Director Oliphant shared that they reached out a few weeks ago and they didn't want to delay and possibly lose the terms. Finance Director Baxter further explained that there is no cost to the City. She emphasized that not every community is chosen to get these terms but we were chosen because of our good credit rating. Engineer Carr noted that most solar, unless you get to the bigger areas, doesn't get a savings. He noted we would be limited on acreage to put in a solar farm. Regarding Code Red, staff uses it when there is a large area emergency. Smaller notified areas receive door hangers. Engineer Carr noted that it was used for the boil order near CEFUCU. He also noted that Code Red uses a phone number not recognized, and residents may not answer it. We can't change what the caller ID says. He further shared that we didn't use Code Red for the wells issue because there wasn't an emergency and we wouldn't want to create panic. He noted that everything tested fine and when we finally received a complaint about the color, we then let everyone know. Public Works Director Rittenhouse noted that maps can sometimes confuse residents as well and we received calls that people outside the area wondered why they are not in the area. It was noted that the website and Facebook are good tools and eNotify contacts people who aren't in the affected area. Mr. Rittenhouse shared that the well has been installed and now we are waiting for sample results. They will then flush the system prior to notifications going out. He noted there still may be issues with color until the entire system gets flushed.

4. ADJOURNMENT: At 8:24 p.m. Alderperson Brownfield moved to adjourn; Alderperson McIntyre seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.


Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk