**Council Meeting**

**Harrisburg City Council**

**Harris-Pruett Building**

**107 E. Church Street**

**Harrisburg, Il 62946**

**March 16, 2023**

**8:00 a.m.**

The Harrisburg City Council met on March 16, 2023 at 8:00 a.m. at the Harris-Pruett Building located at 107 E. Church Street, Harrisburg, IL.

Mayor John McPeek called the meeting to order. Mayor John McPeek presided over the meeting with Commissioners Raymond Gunning, Rupert Johnson and Ron Morse answering roll call. Commissioner Roger Angelly was absent.

Mayor John McPeek wanted to clarify a few things before the meeting started. He stated some comments have been made that are not true and he wanted to set the record straight. The council meetings are currently being held at the Harris-Pruett Building until the proper ADA wheelchair lifts can be installed at City Hall.

In 2022, council chose to change the council times to accommodate all citizens. The first meeting of the month is at 6:00 p.m. with the second meeting of the month being at 8:00 a.m. This change allows citizens to choose to attend a meeting in accordance to their work schedule. Not everyone can attend a 6:00 p.m. meeting and not everyone can attend an 8:00 a.m. meeting; therefore, this allows a citizen to attend at least one meeting a month if they so choose.

Mayor John McPeek state there will be individuals speaking about the Shawnee National Forest. He has suggested the surrounding town leaders get together in the near future and host a townhall meeting to hear all sides of this topic. Today, the City of Harrisburg will be listening to both parties discuss the Shawnee National Forest along with Park and Climate Preserve.

Pastor Bobby Gentry of the River of Life Apostolic Church led the group in prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Raymond Gunning made the motion to approve the consent agenda.

Regular Meeting Minutes – March 02, 2023

Public Hearing Minutes – March 02, 2023

Rebecca & Daniel Tucker – Relinquish Lake Lot – SE Addition, Lot 2

Rebecca & Daniel Tucker – Petition Lake Lot – 4th Addition, Lot 27

Seconded by Commissioner Rupert Johnson. A roll call vote was taken with all present voting yes. Motion carried.

Darla Waters from Globe Life presented information regarding employee benefits. These benefits are permanent, portable, and affordable. There is no cost to the city nor will this replace any existing employee benefits and is at the expense of the employee. Commissioner Ron Morse asked Darla Waters to meet with Treasurer Alex Jackson regarding this insurance plan.

Justin Lawrence with the Shawnee National Forest spoke before the council and Mayor. He is not in favor of turning the Shawnee National Forest into a National Park. The area already is a good source of revenue for the local businesses. There are no guarantees the area will stay the same. He believes there will be restrictions implemented in regards to hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and the area will lose revenue. The park would charge for park passes and entry fees where as now, there is no charge to use the forest. Turning it into a park could jeopardize businesses and homes. He encouraged everyone to do their own research on the forest vs parks.

Roger Lyons spoke on behalf of Shawnee National Park and Climate Preserve. He stated this area has great resources with many tourist sites. Due to the 18% decline in population over the last 40 years, there is a need for growth and turning the forest into a national park could promote growth. A visitor center could be created with guides and rangers for all events in the area to increase tourism which would impact Southern Illinois. It would help with hotels, restaurants, retail, and small businesses.

John Wallace from the Shawnee National Park and Climate Preserve spoke and stated there are some misinformation about this topic. He knows there are concerns too. He stated the USDA is all about logging and selling the timber at the expense of the tax payer. The mission of the park is to preserve not extract. The Shawnee National Forest currently has restrictions on hunting and intends to start charging fees. There needs to be a visitor center.

Mayor John McPeek presented the proposal for the amphitheater to include the design. Commissioner Raymond Gunning made the motion to approve the amphitheater project. Seconded by Commissioner Rupert Johnson. A roll call vote was taken with all present voting yes. Motion carried.

Treasurer Alex Jackson announced the city has made it through Phase I of the Energy Transition Grant. She requested that council allow her to work with Southeastern Regional Development on Phase II. Commissioner Ron Morse made the motion to authorize the city to work with Southeastern Regional Development with the Energy Transition Grant. Seconded by Commissioner Raymond Gunning. A roll call vote was taken with all present voting yes. Motion carried.

Treasurer Alex Jackson introduced Bruce Wallace from AGE to discuss new electric rates. There are several options for the city to choose from. The pricing has gone up since the last contract rate. The city has 48 electric accounts and the new contract will begin July 2023. Commissioner Ron Morse stated Bruce Wallace will get the new rates to Treasurer Alex Jackson. She will present the new contract at the next council meeting.

Council tabled the resolution for the redevelopment of 610 Commercial Street at this time.

Treasurer Alex Jackson presented the 2023/2024 budget to council. There was an open discussion about it. It will sit out in the City Clerk’s office; Treasurer’s office and it will be posted on the city website. The budget will be passed/approved at the April 20, 2023 council meeting.

Commissioner Raymond Gunning stated Durham’s Hardware has been cleaned up and is ready to be advertised. The building will be advertised with a minimum bid set at $10,000. Sealed bids will be opened during the April 20, 2023 council meeting. Commissioner Raymond Gunning made the motion to authorize the City Clerk to advertise for sealed bid for the sale of Durham’s Hardware Building. Seconded by Commissioner Rupert Johnson. A roll call vote was taken with all present voting yes. Motion carried.

Commissioner Rupert Johnson made the motion to install a street light on Sahara Street. Seconded by Commissioner Ron Morse. A roll call vote was taken with all present voting yes. Motion carried.

Commissioner Rupert Johnson announced spring clean-up will be held April 10 through April 21, 2023. For details, citizens can call 618-252-7451 ext. 3. Commissioner Rupert Johnson made the motion to authorize the City Clerk to advertise for Spring Clean Up. Seconded by Commissioner Raymond Gunning. A roll call vote was taken with all present voting yes. Motion carried.

Commissioner Rupert Johnson stated 1114 Holland Street is ready to be put up for sale. Sealed bids will be opened during the April 20, 2023 council meeting. Commissioner Rupert Johnson made the motion to authorize the City Clerk to advertise for sealed bids for the sale of 1114 Holland St. Seconded by Commissioner Raymond Gunning. A roll call vote was taken with all present voting yes. Motion carried.

Commissioner Rupert Johnson made the motion to authorize Attorney Kolby Smithpeters to draft the timber agreement with East Perry Timber Co. Seconded by Commissioner Raymond Gunning. A roll call vote was taken with all present voting yes. Motion carried.

Commissioner Rupert Johnson made the motion to donate a spreader box to the Unit 3 School District. Seconded by Commissioner Raymond Gunning. A roll call vote was taken with all present voting yes. Motion carried.

Mayor John McPeek thanked everyone who attended the meeting. Please stop littering.

Commissioner Raymond Gunning made the motion to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Rupert Johnson. A roll call vote was taken with all present voting yes. Motion carried.

Adjourn: 8:55 a.m.