

PROCEEDINGS
OF
CITY COUNCIL
OF THE
CITY OF LOWELL

For the Regular Meeting of October 17, 2011.

The Meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Hodges and City Clerk Betty Morlock called the roll.

Present: Councilmembers Jeff Altoft, Maryalene LaPonsie, Andrew Schrauben, Mayor Pro Tem Sharon Ellison and Mayor Jim Hodges.

Absent: None.

Also Present: City Manager Mark Howe, City Clerk Betty Morlock, DPW Director Dan DesJarden, Police Chief Barry Getzen, Lowell Light and Power General Manager Greg Pierce and Lowell Light and Power Boardmember and Planning Commission Chair Jim Hall.

Item #1. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA.** City Manager Mark Howe stated Item #7, regarding the Combined Cycle Generating Facility Agreement, does not need to be reviewed by the City Council. Therefore, the item can be deleted from the agenda. However, there has been a request by Lowell Light and Power to add an item regarding retiree cost of living increase to the agenda. This issue could be discussed as Item #7. By general consensus, Council agreed.

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLISON and supported by LAPONSIE to approve the agenda as corrected.

YEA: 5. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 0. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #2. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF OCTOBER 3, 2011.**

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLISON and supported by SCHRAUBEN to approve the regular meeting minutes of October 3, 2011 as written.

YEA: 5. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 0. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #3. **APPROVAL OF THE ACCOUNTS PAYABLES.** Mayor Pro Tem Ellison questioned the Lites Plus bill for the DDA street lights. DPW Director DesJarden indicated the payment for the new downtown light bulbs.

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLISON and supported by LAPONSIE that the bills and accounts payables be allowed and the warrants issued.

YEA: Councilmembers Altoft, LaPonsie, Schrauben, Mayor Pro Tem Ellison and Mayor Hodges.

NAY: NONE. ABSENT: NONE. MOTION CARRIED.

| <u>BILLS AND ACCOUNTS PAYABLE (10/17/11)</u> | |
|--|-------------|
| GENERAL FUND | \$18,372.62 |
| MAJOR STREET FUND | 6,439.21 |
| LOCAL STREET FUND | 4,445.50 |
| DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT FUND | 91,372.05 |
| AIRPORT FUND | 5,723.01 |
| WASTEWATER FUND | 545.40 |
| WATER FUND | 27,379.91 |
| CABLE TV FUND | 29,019.28 |
| DATA PROCESSING FUND | 125.00 |
| EQUIPMENT FUND | 3,111.44 |
| CURRENT TAX FUND | 134,406.36 |
| LEE FUND | 157.50 |

Item #4. **CITIZEN COMMENTS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA.** No comments were received.

Item #5. **PENDING COUNCIL PROJECTS UPDATE.** City Manager Mark Howe had no further update regarding pending council projects.

Item #6. **MERS BENEFIT E ADJUSTMENT FOR LOWELL LIGHT AND POWER RETIREES.** City Manager Mark Howe explained Lowell Light and Power Retirees are eligible for a cost of living increase adjustment through MERS under benefit E. The adjustment must be approved by City Council. The Lowell Light and Power Board approved the cost of living increase by 2% for retirees effective January 1, 2012. Technically, the issue should have been approved and to MERS by October 15, 2011. Therefore, timing is critical.

Mayor Pro Tem Ellison asked if this increase was similar for City retirees. Howe explained it is not in line with other City retirees. However, this is acceptable within the Charter. MERS requires at least 80% funded in order to be able to adopt the increase.

Councilmember LaPonsie questioned when the City of Lowell retirees last received an increase. City Clerk Morlock believed it was three years ago. However, the requirement from MERS states an increase is not eligible until one is at least 80% funded. Howe stated he would explore the issue further within next year's budget.

Councilmember Altoft was concerned regarding Light and Power rushing to get something approved. Altoft questioned when Lowell Light and Power retirees had a raise last. Mayor Hodges responded one year ago. Altoft did not believe this was fair to City retirees.

IT WAS MOVED BY LAPONSIE and seconded by SCHRAUBEN to approve the 2% increase from MERS for Lowell Light and Power retirees.

YEA: 3. (Councilmembers LaPonsie, Schrauben and Mayor Hodges)

NAY: 2. (Councilmember Altoft and Mayor Pro Tem Ellison)

ABSENT: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #7. **CITY DUMPSTER CONTAINER BIDS**. City Manager Mark Howe stated DPW Director Dan DesJarden has obtained quotes for the use of dumpster containers at city facilities. Based upon the quotes, more than 50 percent will be saved over current expenses. The quotes are as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Allied Waste: | \$6,331 |
| Flat River Waste: | \$4,642 |
| Green Valley Disposal | \$4,181 |

In this particular case, the low bid is from Green Valley Disposal. However, Howe recommended the bid from Flat River Waste be approved in the amount of \$4,642.

Councilmember Schrauben questioned if this was an annual contract. Howe stated it is based upon monthly payments or pay as needed. DesJarden explained some of the dumpsters are only used during certain months at the parks.

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLISON and seconded by LAPONSIE to approve the trashing hauling with Flat River Waste for the dumpsters in the amount of \$4,642.

YEA: 5. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 0. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #8. **ALTITUDE VALVE REPAIR QUOTES**. Bob Robinson, Water Distribution Supervisor, has obtained quotes to replace the altitude valve at the water tank on Gee Drive. The city's water system involves water tanks at Shepard Drive and Gee Drive. When the water level in the Shepard Drive tank drops to a pre-determined level, pumps at the water treatment plant are activated and start drawing water from the ground storage tank located behind the water treatment plant. When water is being pumped into the system both tanks begin to fill. Since the Gee Drive tank is closer to the source, it fills faster than the Shepard Drive tank and it would over flow before the Shepard Drive tank was full without the altitude valve. The altitude valve automatically senses the height of the water in the Gee Drive tank and it begins to close, causing backpressure in the system and allowing the Shepard Drive tank to fill. When the water level sensor in the Shepard Drive tank senses that it is full, it turns off the pumps at the water treatment plant. As the water level equalizes in both tanks the altitude valve opens and allows water to be used from both tanks and the cycle starts all over again.

The quotes are:

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| Layne Christensen: | \$3,080 |
| Peerless Midwest: | \$4,747 |

IT WAS MOVED BY LAPONSIE and seconded by ALTOFT to approve the bid from Layne Christensen in the amount of \$3,080 for an altitude valve.

YEA: 5. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 0. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #9. **AIRPORT PROPERTY/TREE AGREEMENTS.** The City Council previously approved a grant agreement with the State of Michigan for \$56,000, including the local match from the Airport Fund. This is being used to negotiate agreements to remove some trees that are in the airspace at the airport. There will be several property owners the consultant will be working with to negotiate the agreements.

The first agreement has been completed and needs to be signed by City Manager Howe. After speaking with City Attorney Richard Wendt it has been determined the City Council should provide a motion allowing Howe to sign and authorize such agreements. The motion would give Howe the authority to sign the agreements subject to being approved by Wendt and not to exceed the funds available for the grant.

IT WAS MOVED BY SCHRAUBEN and seconded by ELLISON to authorize City Manager Howe to execute tree agreements at the City of Lowell Airport property.

YEA: 5. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 0. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #10. **KENT COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT.** The Kent County Board of Public Works has notified the City of Lowell that it has prepared an amendment to the Kent County Solid Waste Plan. The amendment will require the approval of a certain number of Kent County municipalities in order for it to be adopted. Howe's recommendation is for this item to appear on the agenda at this meeting for discussion and information only and to allow the Lowell community to know that we have been asked to approve the amendment. We would then have this as an action item at the November 7, 2011 meeting.

Item #11. **MONTHLY REPORTS.** Mayor Pro Tem Ellison requested last year's police report as well. Police Chief Barry Getzen stated this can be available.

Ellison commented on the amount of water being treated versus the amount of wastewater being treated. She understood this was being worked on but it needs to be resolved soon.

Item #12. **COUNCIL REPORTS AND COMMENTS.** Councilmember Schrauben stated he had a good time at the Michigan Municipal League (MML) Conference. Lots of knowledge was passed around. Also, the ribbon cutting ceremony and grand opening for the LARA trail was a success. The 5K Harvest Hustle was a lot of fun as well. Schrauben noted he missed the last Airport Board meeting and LARA meeting as he was on a business trip in Florida. The Parks and Recreation Commission will meet on October 18, 2011.

Councilmember LaPonsie stated a group worksession meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 19, 2011 from 6 to 10 p.m. The MML conference was great. She referred to a comment made by the City of West Branch, "whining is not a strategy".

Mayor Pro Tem Ellison stated the Arbor Board met Monday, October 10, 2011. They are currently working on the biggest tree contest. A fall planting update was provided. Also, grants are being applied for in order to continue planting trees throughout the City. Ellison noted it is very helpful to attend the MML Conference when serving as a councilmember. There are few opportunities for

professional development. The governor spoke about planning and other exciting things. Ellison believed Lowell is on track.

Mayor Hodges stated the Lowell Light and Power Board met last week. The bio digestion facility is moving forward. The Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors also met last week. He noted this Thursday is “Girls Night Out”. Christmas through Lowell and Christmas in Lowell are the next big events.

Hodges commented on Officer Trevor Slot who served with Lowell Police Department. Chief Getzen stated Officer Trevor Slot served with the Lowell Police Department from 1997 through 2002. Several existing City of Lowell officers who served with Slot will be part of the honor at the funeral. Getzen asked for Council approval to fly the flag at half-staff in honor of Trevor Slot.

IT WAS MOVED BY LAPONSIE and seconded by ELLISON to leave the flags at half-staff through Officer Slot’s funeral.

YEA: 5. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 0. MOTION CARRIED.

Also, former employee Wendy DeNolf is in hospice care. She served the community for some time.

Item #13. **CITY MANAGER’S REPORT**. City Manager Howe commented on the following:

- The City of Lowell welcomed Congressman Justin Amash to the council chambers. He held a town hall meeting on Monday, October 17, from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. It was great to see the congressman as well as Senator Dave Hildabrand. It was a great turnout.
- The recent Harvest Festival and Chili Cook-Off were a success. Lowell was fortunate to have summer-like weather during the weekend. Howe was asked to serve as one of the judges for the Chili Cook-Off. There are many talented chefs in the community!
- The planning and zoning training is October 19, 2011. The City of Lowell has invited members of the planning commissions and zoning boards of appeals from Lowell and Vergennes Townships.
- The City is continuing to explore ways to save energy at city facilities. A training session is coming up to learn more about getting the most efficient use of the automated heating and cooling system at city hall.
- This week Howe will be discussing an exciting opportunity with a representative from Kent County relating to purchasing. Kent County has created a web-based system that allows for “reverse auctions” for the purchase of supplies and equipment. The idea is that potential vendors compete in real time to submit the lowest possible bids for supplies and equipment. It could reduce costs by as much as 10 to 20 percent for local units of government in Kent County. The County offers the use of the system to its local municipalities at no cost.
- Howe has been working with representatives from the North Country Trail Association to mark a rough path through the Moose/Rogers properties. In addition, Howe has been recruiting a few volunteers who might show up on a work day to help clear the path. Eventually this path could become a part of the North Country Trail, but at this point his hope is to just generate some interest in the concept and to start utilizing this wonderful asset.
- Howe commented on the fall Mark Mundt had. He should return back to work soon.

Item #14. **APPOINTMENTS**. No appointments at this time.

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLISON to adjourn at 8:05 p.m.

DATE:

APPROVED:

James W. Hodges, Mayor

Betty R. Morlock, City Clerk