

City Commission
May 18, 2015

Mayor Mark Warba called the regular meeting of the City Commission to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Commissioners Lynn Anderson, Tom Hogenson, Lorraine James, and Dan Rothstein; Mayor Mark J. Warba; City Attorney Eric D. Williams; and City Manager Steve Sober.

Absent: City Treasurer Jon Locke.

There were 7 persons in the audience.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA – none.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Anderson moved, seconded by Commissioner Hogenson that the minutes of the May 4, 2015 meeting be accepted.

Yeas: Anderson, Hogenson, James, Rothstein, Warba

STUDY SESSION

a. Compensation Commission Report

Mr. Sobers presented the report of the Compensation Commission. He informed the City Commission that there is no action to be taken unless the City Commission desires to reject the recommendation of the Compensation Commission.

Commissioner Hogenson stated, serving as a member on the Charter Revision Commission, there was a lot of discussion of how the City Commission salaries could be increased. They were looking at an antiquated salary scale, and there needed to be a way to keep up with inflation, if the City valued the fact that it was going to compensate people. The purpose of the Compensation Commission was so it could make the study and decision of proposed salaries.

Comments from other Commissioners were that most people do not necessarily run for the position because of the money. The recommendation offered by the Compensation Commission seems reasonable.

b. Water Bill Insertion Policy

Discussion of the water bill insertion policy was prompted by a recent insertion for a vacation bible school. Some City Commissioners received phone calls pertaining to the insert.

Some of the comments offered by the City Commissioners and staff were:

- Allowed inserts are a judgement call situation.
- Many people do not understand the water bill insertions as being an advertisement vehicle. They see it as a consensus statement, which causes problems.
- Crafting a policy that provides staff with guidance and helps them determine permissible inserts that do not rely on judgment, may provide the guidance to avoid inserts that some may feel are inappropriate.
- If the City is going to allow inserts, there needs to be a good set of rules outlining what is allowed.
- Perhaps more than one person should be involved in making a decision as to if an insert is appropriate or not.
- Religious materials may need to be included as impermissible items.
- There are rules against combining government and religion, but providing notices of events, without preaching, should not be offensive. It is an event, but judgement will need to be used.
- The concern is if religious information should be sent by the local government. It does not keep religion away from the people, it keeps the City out of sending information about a group or organization that might have a theme to it, particularly if some believe it should not be there.
- The current policy does not prohibit any group from expressing free speech as long as they bring the \$250 fee associated with the stuffers.
- The current policy does not include religious materials as impermissible. It appears appropriate to add a statement to the current policy prohibiting religious materials.
- City Attorney Eric Williams stated that the City allowing access to some form of media is legally described as a 'limited public forum' of which there are specific rules as to how government is supposed to handle them. The fact that the City allows mailings in a water bill is an unusual situation. He would like to do more research, reviewing the current policy and how different situations may work.
- There is a recommendation to increase the cost for inserting materials from \$250 to \$300.

The policy will be reviewed.

During a special surprise recognition, Tom Hogenson was presented with a Proclamation recognizing him for his community involvement and 40 years of service to the Big Rapids Hospital, where he currently serves as Community Relations Director. Several persons were present for the recognition, which included Big Rapids and Reed City Hospital executives and Mecosta County Chamber ambassadors.

The City Commissions took a 14 minute break.

PUBLIC COMMENT – none

RESOLUTION NO. 15-47

Commissioner Hogenson moved, seconded by Commissioner Rothstein, the adoption of the following:

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING FINAL CONDOMINIUM SUBDIVISION
APPROVAL FOR BROOKSIDE ESTATES**

WHEREAS, Big Rapids Housing Commission has recently acquired Copper Pointe subdivision and has renamed it Brookside Estates, and

WHEREAS, the final Condominium Subdivision Plan is for twelve new single-family homes, and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission at its February 18, 2015 meeting, held a public hearing and recommended approval of the final condominium site plan for 720 Woodward Avenue, Brookside Estates, subject to certain planning and practical considerations, and

WHEREAS, City staff recommends that the City Commission accepts these considerations but reserves to City staff the ability to implement/modify these conditions depending upon common sense field conditions including a two year implementation schedule for sidewalk construction.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Commission grant final condominium subdivision approval to the Brookside Estates, 720 Woodward Avenue subject to the conditions of this resolution.

Yeas: Anderson, Hogenson, James, Rothstein, Warba

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.

Date: May 18, 2015

RESOLUTION NO. 15-48

Commissioner Anderson moved, supported by Commissioner Rothstein, the adoption of the following:

**RESOLUTION AWARDING BID FOR BOILER REPLACEMENT
FOR THE WATER TREATMENT PLANT**

WHEREAS, the City solicited bids for the purchase of a boiler replacement for the Water Treatment Plant, and

WHEREAS, bids were received in a design/build fashion, which did not specify to bidders the exact parameters of the type/size/location/details of the heating units for the facility, and

WHEREAS, complete replacement of the existing boiler with two smaller units was deemed to be more costly than desired, staff negotiated with the two low bidders to design/build a lower cost alternative,

WHEREAS, two negotiated proposal/bids were received with staff recommending that the bid of Mall City Mechanical be accepted in the amount of \$ 19,613.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Commission accept the bid of Mall City Mechanical for a net amount of \$ 19,613.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the cost be expensed from account number 599-560-977.000 (equipment).

Yeas: Anderson, Hogenson, James, Rothstein, Warba

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.

Date: May 18, 2015

RESOLUTION NO. 15-49

Commissioner Hogenson moved, seconded by Commissioner Rothstein, the adoption of the following:

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING JONATHAN LOCKE'S RESIGNATION NOTIFICATION

WHEREAS, Jonathan Locke was appointed City Treasurer by Resolution 12-06 dated January 17, 2012 for the City of Big Rapids, and

WHEREAS, the City Treasurer serves at the pleasure of the City Commission, and

WHEREAS, Jonathan Locke has submitted his letter of resignation effective May 26, 2015.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Commission expresses thanks for his service to the City, and hereby accepts the letter of resignation submitted by City Treasurer Jonathan Locke.

Yeas: Anderson, Hogenson, James, Rothstein, Warba

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.

Date: May 18, 2015

UNSCHEDULED BUSINESS

Mr. Sobers stated that Jean Schneidt and Carla Staffen will assist with City Treasurer duties in the absence of a City Treasurer. They will share a 10% increase; 6% to Ms. Schneidt and 4% to Ms. Staffen.

Mr. Warba stated that he would like the City Treasurer posting to include wording that City residency of the City Treasurer will be strongly encouraged. Mr. Williams stated that by State law, residency cannot be a pre-condition requirement. The City can say it is strongly encouraged. A candidate can be told that where they reside is something that will be looked at. Well qualified candidates that require the appointment of the City Commission will be politically sensitive to being a resident of the community where they have applied to work. Commissioners James and Rothstein would like to serve on the Committee to interview the City Treasurer.

Mr. Sobers stated that staff has received an e-mail from Mark Harrison, Michigan Department of Transportation, stating they are prepared to advertise the bid specifications for the new bridge in July.

Commissioners Anderson and Hogenson informed the City Commission of the Old Jail Yard sale on Saturday, May 23, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Commissioner Anderson had the opportunity to attend the Heritage Hill tour in Grand Rapids. It is interesting how the upkeep and oversight of the properties occur. So many of the homes are rentals, but the property owners live on the premises or next door.

Commissioner Rothstein complemented Commissioner Hogenson on the recognition he received at the meeting.

Mayor Warba stated that there is a blight elimination program grant available for up to a maximum of \$250,000 to clean up and/or demolish vacant and blighted property. The application deadline is June 1st.

There being no further business to come before the City Commission, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

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Mayor Mark J. Warba

Roberta R. Cline, City Clerk