

**City of Auburn**  
**Monday, April 5, 2021**  
**Minutes**

Mayor Berola called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Clerk Barnhill called roll call.

**Present in Council Chambers:** Tom Berola, Julie Barnhill, Chris Warwick, Jason Garrett, Larry Hemmerle, Mike Marquis, Rod Johnson, Ben Royer, Joe Powell, Tracy Sheppard, Chief Dave Campbell, Superintendent TJ Henson and Attorney Greg Moredock.

**Present via ZOOM Teleconferencing:** Office Manager Kristy Ponsler

**Absent:** Bill Karhliker

**I. Mayor's Comments**

The Mayor indicated that tonight's meeting will happen via ZOOM Teleconferencing due to statewide COVID-19 pandemic

**A. Sign for Mya Powell for earning Eagle Scout**

Mayor Berola addressed the Council with information regarding Mya Powell, resident of Auburn, whom has earned the rank of Eagle Scout and is the first female in Sangamon County within the State of Illinois and is recommending that a sign be placed at the entrance of the City of Auburn.

Motion by Garrett second by Sheppard to approve the sign purchase and placement at the entrance of the City of Auburn honoring Mya Powell, first female Eagle Scout in Sangamon County within the State of Illinois. (7-0-0-1)

AYES: Garrett, Hemmerle, Johnson, Marquis, Powell, Royer, and Sheppard

NAYES: None

Present: None

ABSENT: Karhliker

**B. Benderz Bike Night – June 11 (temporary liquor permit)**

Owners from Benderz were present to ask for a temporary liquor permit, closing of streets, etc. for the night of June 11 for Bike Night. The owners are working in collaboration with The Slaughterhouse. The bar owners are asking that the entire square be shutdown so that bikes can park. Additional requests are: additional officers on duty, electrical on the square, street sweep prior to that evening, and volunteers are needed. Mayor Berola informed the owners that they are to work with the city office and the Chief to get this event accomplished

**II. VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**III. ZONING**

Alderman Sheppard indicated that the Zoning Board does not have a report at this time.

**IV. CITY CLERK'S REPORT – BARNHILL**

**A. March 15, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Clerk Barnhill presented the March 15, 2021 meeting minutes for the Council's review and approval.

Motion by Royer second by Sheppard to approve the March 15, 2021 meeting minutes. (7-0-0-1)

AYES: Garrett, Hemmerle, Johnson, Marquis, Powell, Royer and Sheppard

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Karhliker

**Statement of Economic Interest**

Clerk Barnhill reminded the Council that their Statement of Economic Interest is due to the County by May 2, 2021.

**V. TREASURER'S REPORT – WARWICK**

**A. Bills List March 16, 2021 to April 5, 2021**

City Treasurer Chris Warwick shared with the Council the Bills List March 16, 2021 to April 5, 2021 for their review and approval.

Motion by Royer second by Johnson to approve the Bills List March 16, 2021 to April 5, 2021. (7-0-0-1)

AYES: Garrett, Hemmerle, Johnson, Marquis, Powell, Royer and Sheppard

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Karhliker

**VI. ATTORNEY'S REPORT**

Attorney Moredock did not have a report.

**VII. DEPARTMENT HEADS**

**Campbell**

Chief Campbell indicated that an anonymous donor has graciously donated a chip reader to the City of Auburn.

### Henson

Superintendent TJ Henson shared with the Council that Dan Parrish took another position so it leaves a void in the summer mowing. Henson recommends to the Council that he would like to hire Tom Burke and Brent Hupp in the vacant mowing positions.

Superintendent Henson also informed the Council that Rod Brandt will not be beginning until June 3.

Motion by Johnson second by Royer to hire Tom Burke and Brent Hupp at \$13 per hour in the vacant mowing positions. (7-0-0-1)

AYES: Garrett, Hemmerle, Johnson, Marquis, Powell, Royer and Sheppard

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Karhliker

Henson also informed the Council that the bucket truck did not pass IDOT inspection. Superintendent Henson also publicly wanted to thank Royell for making adjustments to the tower and reads have been processing much more smoothly.

### Ponsler

Office Manager Kristy Ponsler asked the Superintendent Henson and Chief Campbell to start thinking end of fiscal year and working toward new fiscal year. Committee meetings will need to be set up and union negotiations will begin.

## **VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **A. Administration – Johnson**

Alderman Johnson set up an Administration Committee Meeting to discuss budget on Tuesday, April 13, 6:30 p.m.

### **Public Works – Karhliker**

Alderman Karhliker was absent so no report. Alderman Royer did ask that the Council consider cleaning the streets around the square for Bike Night—June 11.

### **Public Utilities – Johnson**

#### **Gas**

Alderman Johnson shared with the Council that the Public Utilities Committee Wednesday, March 24, 6:30 p.m. information:

1. Gas usage, actual gas rate, and additional costs from the month of February:

Alderman Johnson shared by providing the final billing and invoice received from Utility Gas Management (UGM) for the City's purchase of natural gas in February. Total amount due as specified on the invoice is \$859,920.01 for 27,900 MMBTU [or Dekatherm (dth)]. This equates to an average billing rate of \$30.82/dth and not the billing rate as initially stated by the city office of \$27.5753/dth (rounded up to \$27.60/dth). This corrected billing rate was determined as shown on the attached billing summaries created from the customer billing spreadsheet created by Alderman Johnson. The first summary was created from the billing spreadsheet summary which

calculated the total revenue due as calculated with the initial \$27.60 rate with the city's differential of \$4.55 for a combined billing rate of \$32.15. This summary indicates that for the final billing report, the City's billing for total volume of gas sold was 3646 MMBTU (dth) short of the volume sold to the City per UGM's February invoice. With this storage of gas volume billed, the total revenue due to the City if February's usage was billed at \$32.15/dth and paid in full would be \$784,725.12, approximately \$72,194.89 short of the \$859,920.01 paid to UGM. The second summary was created from the billing spreadsheet summary which calculated the total revenue due as calculated with the actual \$30.82 rate with the city's differential of \$4.55 for a combined billing rate of \$35.37. When asked for an explanation for the two gas rates provided on the UGM invoice, Ron Reagan indicated the top rate, which is usually the higher rate of the two rates provided, should always be used for determining the City's billing rate. This higher of the two rates was the \$30.82/dth rate, the second rate being the initial rate of \$27.57. This summary, which also includes a billing volume shortage of 3646 MMBTU (dth), the total revenue due to the City if February's usage was billed at \$35.37/dth and paid in full would be \$866,620.15, a profit of approximately \$6,700.14. This total also includes the total tax billed at 0.75% which equates to \$6,404.07 if removed from the total profit leaves \$296.07 for the total profit to the City. Together with the City's differential of \$4.55, the total billing rate of \$35.37/dth equates to a 352% increase compared to January's billing rate of \$10.05/dth. The volume shortage of 3,646 MMBTU equates to a 13% volume loss when compared to UGM's billed volume of 27,900 MMBTU. Discussion regarding the volume shortage billed by the city vs. volume billed by UGM ensued with possibilities for the difference being the fact that gas meters were read 1-week prior to the end of the billing cycle by UGM. Regardless, even with the city's differential of \$4.55/dth which was estimated to net \$108,000 net income to the City by the City's gas engineer Lindsay Enloe, the City will just barely cover its cost for February's gas with a net revenue of \$296.07.

Next steps for utility billing: Alderman Johnson explained his customer billing spreadsheet which computes the remaining balance owed per customer by computing the actual total cost per customer at the \$35.37/dth rate with tax at 0.75% and subtracting the billed amount for February at the \$10.05/dth rate with tax at 0.75%. Alderman Johnson indicated that the average remaining balance was approximately \$370.

Options for repayment of the remaining balance was discussed at length with the following possibilities mentioned:

1. Pay remaining balance in full;
2. Determine monthly installment amounts per account based on a payoff date set by the City Council; or
3. Determine a minimum monthly installment which would be paid monthly until remaining balance is paid in full. Consensus of those committee and council members in attendance was to offer options 1 and 2 for paying off the remaining balance. For the

number of installments, council members were also in agreement that the remaining balances should be paid off prior to the end of the 2021 resulting in 6 installment payments. The installment amount per account will be based on a 6-month payoff. Alderman Johnson will generate a form letter which will be sent to each natural gas customer. The form letter will pull data from the billing spreadsheet to provide the following information:

- A. February gas usage in dekatherms (dth);
- B. Actual Total February gas amount due at the \$35.37/dth rate
- C. Billed February gas amount at the \$10.05/dth rate; and
- D. The remaining balance owed (difference of items B and C above).

Alderman Johnson created the form letter and emailed it to all council members for review and approval. If no revisions are required or once all revisions are made, Alderman Johnson will generate the 1665 letters, once he adds the corrected tax information, to be sent to the natural gas customers. Date for when payments would be accepted was discussed. Alderman Powell indicated that he personally as well as several other customers that he had talked to would like to pay the remaining balance in full as soon as possible. Office Manager Ponsler indicated that she had discussed this issue with the city's accountant, and it may be more appropriate to bill the remaining balance on the April utility bill where payments would be received in FY22. With this advice, the form letter will be sent ASAP indicating payments will be accepted with the April utility bill due by May 31st.

Alderman Johnson discussed options and repayments scenarios based on a 6-month scenario. If residents did not make the one-time payment in full, or, pay the initial installment for the 6-month billing then they be in arrears and subject to further action in regard to their city services. Alderman Garrett indicated that he took exception to this as the city was given the most flexible of repayment options regarding paying the debt back and the city was attempting to be inflexible with the residents.

Mayor Berola also indicated that he inquired about the loan and there is only one payment (loan and interest) that will be due in February 2024. Paying it off early would obviously be the best interest of the City of Auburn.

**Auburn IEPA Reimbursement Packet #8**

Alderman Johnson shared with the Council the Auburn IEPA Reimbursement Packet #8 in the amount of \$339,216.44 to be paid.

Motion by Johnson second by Powell to pay the Auburn IEPA Reimbursement Packet #8 in the amount of \$339,216.44. (7-0-0-1)

AYES: Garrett, Hemmerle, Johnson, Marquis, Powell, Royer and Sheppard

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Karhliker

### **Health & Safety – Sheppard**

Alderman Sheppard indicated that Officer Pearce will be staying with the Auburn Police Department. Chief Campbell informed the Council that the officers are working 12 hour shifts and seems to be working out for almost all of them. Campbell then introduced Pawnee Office Dave Shaffer and that he would like to offer him a full time position with the Council's approval. Officer Shaffer is fully certified and would replace Officer Todd.

Motion by Royer second by Marquis to hire Dave Shaffer beginning April 19, per union contract wage, as a full time police officer with the City of Auburn Police Department. (7-0-0-1)

AYES: Garrett, Hemmerle, Johnson, Marquis, Powell, Royer and Sheppard

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Karhliker

### **Lexipol Policy Procedure**

Chief Campbell shared with the Council that he would like to see the Police Department use Lexipol Policy Procedure. This is an app that officers use on their phones and is available immediately. The cost associated with Lexipol Policy is \$4,580 per year and requires timelines and completion training set up by Chief Campbell for each officer.

Motion by Sheppard second by Marquis to approve the purchase of Lexipol Policy Procedure App in the amount of \$4,580 annually with timelines and completion training set up by Chief Campbell for each officer. (7-0-0-1)

AYES: Garrett, Hemmerle, Johnson, Marquis, Powell, Royer and Sheppard

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Karhliker

### **Burn Ban**

Alderman Sheppard presented information to the Council regarding the dumping of bags of leaves in plastic garbage bags and large stumps at the Lost Caboose. Alderman Hemmerle stated that he has seen cars excessively speeding down the lane to the Caboose, ATVs being ridden on top of the burn pile, and neighbors are complaining about all of this. Superintendent Henson indicated that when they are allowed to burn the pile it will be a huge undertaking because they are accumulating so much. Alderman Marquis stressed the health issues related to burning. After a lengthy discussion on other options for the burn ban the council discussed shutting down the Lost Caboose and putting the responsibility back on the residents.

Motion by Sheppard second by Marquis to begin the process of rewriting the Ordinance to ban burning permanently and shut down the Lost Caboose to citizens. (4-3-0-1)

AYES: Hemmerle, Marquis, Powell and Sheppard  
NAYES: Garrett, Johnson and Royer  
ABSENT: Karhliker

**Health & Housing – Sheppard**

Alderman Sheppard reminded the Council that Electronic Recycling Event will be held on Saturday, April 24, at the Firehouse between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m.

**Parks – Hemmerle**

Alderman Hemmerle indicated that he did not have a report.

**Economic Development**

Economic Development Representative Chris Warwick indicated that he did not have a report.

**IX. OTHER BUSINESS**

**Electrical Box at City Square**

Alderman Garrett shared with the Council that he would like to see the City proceed with the approval of updating the electrical box. Bid estimates that were previously provided to the City were Ameren at \$1900 and Lewis Electric at \$6000. Superintendent Henson will reach out again to get bids.

Motion by Garrett second by Royer to approve the updating of the electrical box on the north east corner of the square with the price not to exceed \$10,000. Alderman Garrett indicated that there was significant money that went unused from the building and ground maintenance funds so these could be used for such project. After a general discussion, the hope was to have the project complete by the time needed for an event on the square in June. (7-0-0-1)

AYES: Garrett, Hemmerle, Johnson, Marquis, Powell, Royer and Sheppard  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Karhliker

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Garrett second by Marquis to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. Passed by voice vote. (7-0-0-1)

AYES: Garrett, Hemmerle, Johnson, Marquis, Powell, Royer and Sheppard  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Karhliker

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Barnhill  
City Clerk