

**City of Auburn**  
**City Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, October 18, 2021**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Mayor Berola with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance of all present.

Mayor Berola called for the roll. Present were Clerk Warwick, Mayor Berola, Treasurer Williams, Alderman Garrett, Alderman Johnson, Alderman Karhliker, Alderman Marquis, Alderman Powell, Alderman Royer, Alderwoman Sheppard. Absent was Alderman Hemmerle. Also present were Attorney Moredock, Chief Campbell was absent, Officer Winkelman was present to represent the Police Department, Superintendent Henson, and Office Manager Ponsler.

Mayor Berola presented illustrations by Lynn Pignon and funded by John Narmont related to Auburn and President Lincoln in honor of Sangamon County's Bicentennial. These illustrations will hang in the council chambers. Ms. Pignon has requested a brown informational highway sign for Union Park. It was noted a City Office sign is needed as well; this idea came from Tami Travous.

Jessica Lance was not in attendance regarding Trunk or Treat and Oktoberfest on October 22<sup>nd</sup> and October 23<sup>rd</sup>. There were outstanding questions regarding street closures and the use of alcohol near or around the City Square. This led to a discussion regarding the use of alcohol on city right of way and the need for proper approval and enforcement by establishments. The construction and rules regarding beer gardens. There will be a review of the City's current ordinances related to bars/taverns and updates will be back to the council at a future date. It was noted that several establishments were not in compliance.

Alderwoman Sheppard gave an update from the Zoning meeting regarding the Hart property 14250 Dixon Road. It was the Zoning Board's recommendation to approve the annexation once all paperwork is filed. Martha Searcy requested to have an enclosed deck extended from her property at 361 East Washington Street. The deck will go out 8 feet and it would align with other properties on the same block. Alderman Royer made a motion to approve the request, second by Alderman Marquis.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Hemmerle

Clerk Warwick presented the October 4, 2021 meeting minutes for the council's review and approval. A motion was made by Alderman Powell to approve the meeting minutes, second by Alderman Johnson.

AYES: Johnson, Karhliker, Marquis, and Powell

NAYES: Garrett and Royer

PRESENT: Sheppard

ABSENT: Hemmerle

\* It was requested that Mayor Berola vote on this item, he voted yes. It was noted that Present votes go towards the majority vote, so his vote was not needed.

Treasurer Williams presented the bills list from October 5, 2021, to October 18, 2021, for the council's review and approval. Treasurer Williams noted that the bills list went out via e-mail and drop box. Some council members noted that they did not receive them before the meeting. The software for billing is only showing the first line of the expense, so there were several items under CDS Office Technologies. The expense under Rickey Sponsler is for an account set up at the Truck Center, the city did not have an account, so the expense is a reimbursement to Rickey Sponsler. A motion was made by Alderwoman Sheppard to approve the bills list, second by Alderman Johnson.

AYES: Johnson, Powell, and Sheppard

NAYES: Garrett and Royer

PRESENT: Karhliker and Marquis

ABSENT: Hemmerle

Motion passed.

Treasurer Williams presented the September 2021 Cash Report for the council's review and approval. A motion was made by Alderwoman Sheppard to approve the September Cash Report, second by Alderman Royer.

AYES: Johnson, Powell, Royer, and Sheppard

NAYES: Garrett

PRESENT: Karhliker and Marquis

ABSENT: Hemmerle

Motion passed.

Attorney Moredock presented the first reading of Ordinance 1506-21 for the annexation of 14250 Dixon Road (Hart). There was a concern about the maintenance of the road versus the township's responsibility. There is more paperwork that needs to be filed by Jeff Hart before final approval.

Officer Winkelman had no report for the Police Department.

Office Manager Ponsler had no report.

Superintendent Henson acknowledged the council's approval to allow Mr. Hupp to go past 1,000 hours as a part-time worker with the city. Henson reviewed the number of lights along City Square and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. There are four decorative lights in the City Square Park plus the bandstand lighting, there are 24 lights on the bill, making approximately 20% of the bill the responsibility of the Parks. From the last Ameren bill, it would be \$55.00. Henson reported that they have cleared a site at the sewer plant that could be a burning site for the city. It would be leaves and grass clippings only at the site if the council approves and the site would be residential customers only, no action was taken.

The water operator in Thayer passed away and the Illinois EPA approached Auburn to see if we could assist. John Edie would be a subcontractor with the Village of Thayer. The current contract would be a temporary one-year contract. The outside employment would need council approval. Alderman Johnson made a motion to approve John Edie to work with the Village of Thayer as a water operator on a contract basis, second by Alderwoman Sheppard.

AYES: Garrett, Johnson, Karhliker, Marquis, Powell, and Sheppard

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Hemmerle

Office Manager Ponsler reported that we are past the six months for repayment by residents for the natural gas spike that occurred in February 2021. All but 3 properties have paid the amount owed, other properties owners have moved out of town, or the past due amount was covered by a landlord. She is reaching out to Illinois Treasurer's office, to see about collections via the Illinois Income Tax Refunds. Ponsler requested that the city look at another FOIA Officer.

Mayor Berola updated the council on the current natural gas prices. The natural gas prices have dipped but not to the point that would be satisfactory to the city so only a portion of the hedge was purchased. The city still has a remaining hedge to be purchased and our natural gas engineer Ron Ragan is actively monitoring the prices to find the lowest price. The question was raised on how much natural gas was purchased; it was estimated that 50% of the gas has been purchased. A discussion followed on pricing and the right time to buy natural gas futures. Ron Ragan indicated that customers could see a 40% to 50% increase in natural gas bills.

Alderwoman Sheppard presented the Health and Housing report because the Oller's were present because of the \$2,800.00 fine that was assessed to her property because of unsightly accumulations. Mrs. Oller indicated that she could pay the \$2,800.00 amount, she is on a fixed income. The property has been corrected and her other son stated that it will stay in compliance. Alderwoman Sheppard reminded Ms. Oller since her property has been out of compliance in the past, the city can take immediate action on the property. A short discussion followed, and a motion was made by Alderwoman Sheppard to reduce the fine to \$280.00 and to be paid by January 16, 2022; second Alderman Royer.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Hemmerle

Alderwoman Sheppard indicated that she is still working on 416 West North Street and 434 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

Alderwoman Sheppard had no report for the Health & Safety Committee.

Jessica Lance spoke to the council regarding the upcoming events. They are having a Trunk or Treat event on the City Square Friday evening (10/22/2021) from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM. On Saturday (10/23/2021) they are having a fall festival with a bounce house, magician, live music, and vendors. There will also be a chili cook-off and craft brewers arranged by Slaughterhouse Brewing. The council indicated that the craft brewers will have to be on the Slaughterhouse's property, a noise permit will be needed for the music, and insurance information will need to be provided for the bounce house. Street closures would be handled by the mayor. There were concerns from the council regarding the last event held by Bewitching Botanicals because of the size of the event and the lack of communication from the

organizers to the city. Ms. Lance indicated that the event increased revenues by \$50,000.00 for the businesses on the City Square. The alcohol sales and dram shop requirements are the responsibility of Slaughterhouse.

Ms. Lance announced that her business is looking to do a Holiday Market on Sunday, December 12, 2021, from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM and would like to block off Madison Street in front of her business to do the event. Santa Claus would be at the event along with vendors and food trucks. She also asked about bringing in a mobile bar for a future event, the mobile bar would have its own insurance. Attorney Moredock stated he would have to investigate the issue.

It was recommended that when the council reviews the ordinances for bars/taverns, the local owners be invited to the meeting to solicit input.

Alderman Johnson reported that group health insurance was discussed at the Committee meeting, the recommendation from the committee was that employees would vote on the plans from either Health Alliance or Blue Cross Blue Shield. The city would cover the first \$650.00 of the monthly insurance premium. It was asked what would happen if there was a tie among the employees. If that was the case council would have to break the tie. A discussion followed regarding the plans and different ways that insurance could be picked. Alderman Johnson made a motion to stay with the two same Blue Cross Blue Shield currently has, second by Alderman Garrett.

AYES: Garrett, Johnson, Marquis, and Powell

NAYES: Royer and Sheppard

PRESENT: Karhliker

ABSENT: Hemmerle

Motion passes.

Alderman Johnson reported that Brent Hupp will assist in the city office, his salary will be discussed at the next meeting.

Alderman Karhliker reported that he will be meeting with Benton and Associates soon to discuss work on West North Street using the Build Illinois Funds. The work could include road work, water lines, and sidewalks. A concern was brought up about the width of North 5<sup>th</sup> Street, north of North Street.

Alderman Johnson had no report for Public Utilities. There was concern about the completion of the water project, the cost of pipe has increased. The pipe is available but it is a different thickness which requires different fittings. Increased costs are a concern. Alderman Johnson indicated there will be a Public Utilities meeting in November.

Clerk Warwick presented a proposal from NextSite for economic development. The Village of Divernon has signed on in addition to Sangamon County. The cost would be \$2,000.00 per year for three years with a \$4,500.00 success fee and NextSite would provide market details for the city council. Chatham has also looked at partnering with NextSite. Warwick will get contract information to Attorney Moredock.

Motion to adjourn was made at 9:20 PM by Alderwoman Sheppard, second by Alderman Marquis.  
Taken by voice vote.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Hemmerle

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Warwick

City Clerk of Auburn