

**City of Mt. Vernon, Illinois
Regular City Council Meeting
Monday, December 3, 2018
7:00 p.m.
MINUTES**

The Mt. Vernon City Council held a Regular City Council Meeting on Monday, December 3, 2018 at the Rolland W. Lewis Community Building, Veterans Park, 800 South 27th Street, Mt. Vernon, Illinois.

Mayor John Lewis called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Pastor Jeff Steward of SSM Pastoral Care gave the Invocation.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ROLL CALL

Roll call showed present: Council Member Jeff May, Council Member Donte Moore, Council Member Jim Rippy, Council Member Mike Young, and Mayor John Lewis.

PRESENTATION OF JOURNALS

The Journal for the November 19, 2018 Regular City Council Meeting was presented for approval.

Council Member Donte Moore motioned to approve the Journal as presented. Seconded by Council Member Mike Young. Yeas: May, Moore, Rippy, Young, and Lewis.

VISITORS/CITIZENS REQUESTS/ADDRESSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

No comments were heard.

APPROVAL OF CONSOLIDATED VOUCHERS FOR ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

The Consolidated Vouchers for Accounts Payable were presented to Council for approval. Council Member Jim Rippy asked if Mt. Vernon had a video similar to Benton's marketing video. City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel explained that soon, Greater Egypt Regional Planning will be preparing an aerial map of Mt. Vernon to assist in marketing our area. She will speak with the Jefferson County Development Commission (JCDC) about how to use the aerial map. Bechtel stated that JCDC has a marketing video, but it is not specific to the new industrial park. Rippy questioned the \$9,188.85 payable to Ogletree Deakins. Bechtel explained that Ogletree Deakins is the firm for the City's labor attorneys for union contract negotiations and arbitration.

Council Member Mike Young motioned to approve the Consolidated Vouchers for Accounts Payable in the amount of \$1,548,225.64. Seconded by Council Member Jeff May. Yeas: May, Moore, Rippy, Young, and Lewis.

BIDS AND QUOTES

No bids and quotes were presented.

CITY MANAGER

City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel requested permission to seek bids for a new roof, windows, and doors for the 12th Street and Casey Public Works Building. Bechtel reported that funds are budgeted in the Capital Improvement Fund to repair the roof and the replacement of windows and doors. This building houses Fleet Services, Public Works, Public Utilities, and Parks. The estimated cost is \$47,000.

Council Member Donte Moore motioned to grant permission to seek bids for a new roof, windows, and doors for the 12th Street and Casey Public Works Building. Seconded by Council Member Mike Young. Yeas: May, Moore, Rippy, Young, and Lewis.

CITY ATTORNEY

Corporation Counsel Bill Howard presented for First Reading of an Ordinance Concerning the Levy and Collection of Taxes. Finance Director Merle Hollmann reported that overall the City is proposing a 2.17% levy increase. Last year's levy increase was 4.99%. The reason for the decrease is that the City is almost 100% funded in IMRF and the City's IMRF rate dropped almost 4%. This allowed the City to levy \$100,206.73 less for IMRF. The Fire Pension Fund Levy of \$954,479 went up 3.83% and the Police Pension Fund of \$895,148 went up 7.01%. The Social Security Levy went up 24.89% due to the City recalling employees and adjusting for the last year's levy reduction. The Special Service Area #1 Tax Levy is \$84,800 and the Parks Levy is \$279,700. Council Member Jim Rippy asked at what point will the City realize that something needs to be done about the Fire and Police Funds. City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel replied that the City is making an additional contribution of \$491,033.60 to the Fire Pension and \$484,080.37 to the Police Pension to get these funds fully funded. The required contribution numbers from the State of Illinois includes the base pension contribution as well as an additional sum to meet the requirement of 90% funding in 2040. Throughout the years, the City has contributed additional amounts to the Fire and Police Funds. Council Member Jeff May stated the stock market helped this year and it may be reversed next year. Mayor John Lewis stated that many Illinois communities have had massive layoffs of Police and Fire members because the communities cannot handle their pension requirements. Bechtel stated that the total levy is \$2,964,827. This includes the abatement of tax levies for the 2010 and 2012 Bonds. The bond payments will be made from other funds. Merle Hollman reported that the Police and Fire Funds have about \$21 million dollars in unfunded liability.

Hollmann gave an explanation of the Special Service Area District #1. This is an additional tax on any building in the downtown area. The funds are used for cleanup, resurfacing, sidewalks, street lights, trash receptacles, and benches, etc.

Council Member Jim Rippy asked why the Fire Department's overtime is so high. He requested that the Fire Chief come to a Council Meeting to explain. City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel stated that the Fire Department's overtime is at 10%. Lately, overtime costs have been higher due to the end of the year and employees are trying to get their vacations and personal time in since the leave does not carry over into 2019. The City has a minimum staffing level of six employees per shift and if someone uses leave time another employee needs to work. In

addition, there are some employees on an extended leave. Rippy said that the Fire Department is accountable for 34% of the City's overtime cost which he said was fundamentally wrong. Rippy requested more detail from the Department Head as to why the overtime is so high. Rippy asked who determines minimum staffing. Bechtel replied that she makes the decision and that there needs to be enough employees to staff the three Fire Stations and operate the machinery. Mayor John Lewis stated that two employees staff each station or six employees per shift. He does not see how the minimum staffing can be reduced unless a Fire Station closes. Bechtel will ask the Fire Chief to come to a future City Council Meeting to speak on the overtime costs. Overall for the entire City, the overtime rate is at 6.8%.

Council Member Donte Moore stated that this year's levy is 2.17% down from 4.99% last year. Council Member Jim Rippy stated that it is still increasing taxes by almost \$63,000. Rippy said that he is opposed to the levy increase. Mayor John Lewis stated that the cost of government continues to rise, and he feels that the City has done a good job cutting expenses. Last year, the City should have raised the levy over 9%, instead of 4.99%. Because the levy was not raised to 9%, the City had to subsidize the reduced funds from other City funds.

First Reading was held.

Corporation Counsel Bill Howard presented for First Reading of an Ordinance Authorizing the City of Mt. Vernon to Borrow Funds from the Public Water Supply Loan Program (IEPA). City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel explained that this Ordinance is required for the IEPA Loan Application. The City is planning the renovation of the 500,000-gallon elevated water storage tank situated at Opdyke Avenue. The estimated cost of construction and installation is \$973,689.50. The costs are to be paid from with a loan to the City from the Public Water Supply Program through the Illinois Environmental Agency (IEPA). The loan is to be repaid from revenues of the system received from the 2% increase in water rates enacted by Ordinance 2016-17 and revenues received from the 1% increase in the Mt. Vernon Home Rule Municipal Retailers and Service Occupation Tax enacted by Ordinance 2017-42. Bechtel explained that the City will be requesting a 50 percent forgiveness on this loan, but it is not clear if the state will grant that request. The State will look at the City's revenues, population, and poverty rates to see if the City qualifies.

Council Member Donte Moore motioned to suspend the rules on voting on an Ordinance. Seconded by Council Member Jeff May. Yeas: May, Moore, Rippy, Young, and Lewis. Council Member Donte Moore motioned to adopt Ordinance #2018-44, an Ordinance Authorizing the City of Mt. Vernon to Borrow Funds from the Public Water Supply Loan Program (IEPA). Seconded by Council Member Mike Young. Yeas: May, Moore, Rippy, Young, and Lewis.

Corporation Counsel Bill Howard presented an Inducement Resolution for the Development of Real Estate Property by Ram Property Development at 108 N. 9th Street (Granada). Russell Brown, owner, plans to continue renovation and improvement of the building. City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel explained that if they are awarded TIF Benefits, any expenses that are eligible for reimbursement after the date of this Inducement Resolution can be considered for reimbursement in the TIF benefit. The proposed Resolution is not a guarantee or award of any TIF benefit. City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel explained that a formal application will be submitted to the TIF Board and then the TIF Board sends their recommendation to the City Council for final approval.

Council Member Donte Moore motioned to approve the Inducement Resolution for the Development of Real Estate Property by Ram Property Development at 108 N. 9th Street (Granada). Seconded by Council Member Mike Young. Yeas: May, Moore, Rippy, Young, and Lewis.

MAYOR

Mayor John Lewis reported on the Christmas Craft Fair that was held at the Rolland W. Lewis Community Center on December 1, 2018. The event was very well attended causing traffic to back up on 27th Street.

CITY COUNCIL

Council Member Jim Rippy asked for an update on the audit work of Azavar Government Solutions Local Government Revenues. City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel reported that the audit is not complete. The revenues that have been audited found minimal results. This shows that most of the taxes are being paid appropriately. Finance Director Merle Hollmann stated that currently, Azavar is auditing the City's Food and Beverage Tax.

Council Member Jim Rippy asked for information regarding the North 42nd Street buy-out. City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel explained that the City was required to replant the white pines on North 42nd Street. The trees are dying and instead of replanting the trees again, the City gave the property owner an agreed dollar amount.

VISITORS/CITIZENS REQUESTS/ADDRESSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

No comments were heard.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session was held.

ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Mike Young motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Council Member Jeff May. Yeas: May, Moore, Rippy, Young, and Lewis.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mary Jo Pemberton
City Clerk