

**CITY OF WILLIAMSTON
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 23, 2005
MINUTES**

Mayor Zichi called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Council Chambers at 161 E. Grand River Ave., Williamston, Michigan. Mayor Zichi led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Zichi, Council Members Davis, DeForest, Hanna, Monroe, VanAllsburg
Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Wittrup (arrived at 7:05 p.m.)
Others: City Manager Hitchcock, Attorney Perrone, Executive Secretary Garnham, Police Chief Ambs
Visitors: Enterprise Reporter Will Whelton; NIESA Representative Jamie Janson; Williamston Tennis Booster Representatives Sheryl Topliff, Steve Stanley, Linda Mullen, Kate VanAllsburg, Val Taylor, Jesseca Taylor, Ben Taylor and Rutger Hoag; TMN Representative Rudy Hirt; JFM Productions

4. Approval of Agenda

Mayor Zichi stated that item 11c, Letter of Resignation, should be added to the agenda. (*Mayor Pro-Tem Wittrup arrived at 7:05 p.m. during the review of the agenda*)

Motion by **DeForest**, seconded by **Wittrup**, to approve the agenda with the addition of item 11c. Voice vote all Yes. **Motion carried.**

5. Audience Participation (non-agenda items)

NIESA Representative Jamie Janson congratulated Mayor Zichi and Council Members DeForest and Hanna for successfully completing a CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) course held at City Hall and gave them CPR certification cards.

6. Public Hearing – Proposed Fiscal Year 2005-2006 Budget

The public hearing was opened at 7:08 p.m. by Mayor Zichi. The Mayor commented that setting the fiscal budget was the single most important thing City Council does each year. He said the budget discussion would be in two parts: the water/sewer budgets, then everything else. The Mayor asked City Manager Hitchcock to explain the proposed water and sewer rates.

Hitchcock stated that Utility Financial Solutions (UFS) had performed a water and sewer rate analysis. She stated that the intent is for connection fees from new users to be set aside for future capital projects needed to increase the capacity of the systems. Service fees, such as water meter installation, had also been reviewed to ensure we were covering costs. UFS had proposed a revenue-neutral rate change for the water system that would lower the Readiness-to-Serve charge and increase the Commodity (volume) charge to

shift more cost to higher volume users. Hitchcock also stated that UFS had recommended a 2.7% increase in sewer rates to adequately cover current debt loads and to prepare for future projects.

Zichi stated that the water and sewer fund balances were being built up to cover current and future projects without having to borrow as much money. Manager Hitchcock stated that scheduled sewer system improvements would help delay the necessity for a wastewater treatment plant expansion that would cost millions of dollars. Zichi stated that the proposed rates would help lower volume users, such as people on fixed incomes.

Hitchcock discussed other budget priorities as follows:

- the primary staffing issue will be to find a replacement for Police Chief Ambs, who is resigning
- the City is working with the School System on finding a facility that could house all City services in one location
- a City website is being created and should be up in the next few months
- City staff are researching the creation of a Park and Recreation Committee
- a Master Sidewalk Plan will be implemented, beginning with an inventory of all existing sidewalks
- Streetscape Phase II on north Putnam will be completed this summer
- the Putnam Street Bridge will be completed with the exception of final paving, which will be done in spring 2006
- East Riverside Drive will be completely reconstructed, including water, sewer, sidewalks and roadway, in the summer of 2006
- a Water System Master Plan will be completed

Zichi stated that the General Fund Balance, which was negative during much of the 1990s, was being built up to cover "rainy day" issues.

The Mayor asked for public comment, and there was no response from the audience.

Davis asked if the water quality on East Riverside would improve as a result of the planned work. Hitchcock stated that the water main replacement would eliminate water main breaks, which was a major cause of water quality problems on East Riverside. Zichi stated that replacing the sewer on East Riverside would eliminate a source of groundwater in the sewer system and help prevent basement backups, which had occurred there in the past.

The public hearing was closed at 7:22 p.m.

7. **Approval of Minutes – Regular Council Meeting of May 9, 2005**

City Manager Hitchcock stated that there was a spelling correction in item 8i, “inconsistencies.” Motion by **DeForest**, seconded by **Wittrup**, to approve the minutes with the spelling correction. Voice vote all Yes. **Motion carried.**

8. **Accounts Payable**

Hanna reported that the accounts payable, reference numbers 4706-4770, total \$110,693.33 and include payroll, consultant and attorney fees, utilities, insurance premiums and other miscellaneous supplies and services.

Motion by **Hanna**, seconded by **Wittrup**, to approve the accounts payable as presented. Yes: Monroe, VanAllsburg, Hanna, Zichi, DeForest, Wittrup, Davis. No: none. **Motion carried.**

9. **Presentation by Williamston Tennis Boosters**

Sheryl Topliff stated that the Williamston Tennis Boosters had a vision for tennis in the community, and introduced Steve Stanley, Tennis Coach. Mr. Stanley stated that in 2000, there were seven girls and six boys playing JV (Junior Varsity) tennis, and by 2004 there were 53 girls and 32 boys playing JV tennis. He stated that there had been a 350% increase in youth interest in tennis, and still growing.

Ms. Topliff stated that the Tennis Boosters had been in contact with Williamston Community Schools to discuss the issue of covered tennis courts and a possible school system contribution, and that a covered facility would allow out of season practice.

Linda Mullen stated that the Tennis Boosters were looking into possible sources for funding, such as the United States Tennis Association (USTA) or a Healthy Community grant.

Mayor Zichi stated that a Park and Recreation Committee will be formed, that applications are available at City Hall, and that a wide range of voices would be needed to cover all of the community’s interests.

Council Member VanAllsburg asked if the Park and Recreation Committee would be involved in getting grants for a tennis facility. Zichi stated that they would help coordinate those efforts.

Davis asked about the money used to build Memorial Park. Zichi stated that federal funds had been used, with the stipulation that the park be used for outdoor recreation.

10. Action Items

a. Bond Sale – Awarding Resolution 09-05

City Manager Hitchcock stated that three bids had been received for the water and sewer revenue bonds, and that the lowest bid, from J.J.B. Hilliard, W.L. Lyons, Inc. had a Total Interest Cost (TIC) of 4.705742%.

Motion by **DeForest**, seconded by **Wittrup** to approve City Council Resolution 09-05 as presented. Yes: VanAllsburg, Hanna, Zichi, DeForest, Wittrup, Davis, Monroe. No: none. **Motion carried.**

b. Letter of Agreement Between the City of Williamston and AFSCME Local 1390.09

City Manager Hitchcock stated that the most qualified candidate for the position of DPW Group Leader had 15 years of equipment operating experience in utilities and streets. The DPW contract has five pay rates for Group Leader based on one to five years of seniority, and that because of the candidate's level of experience he would be starting at the one-year pay rate, of \$14.86 per hour. Because this is different from the union contract, the union members had to agree to the variance, which they had.

Motion by **DeForest**, seconded by **Wittrup** to approve the letter of agreement as presented. Yes: Hanna, Zichi, DeForest, Wittrup, Davis, Monroe, VanAllsburg. No: none. **Motion carried.**

c. Employee Manual

City Manager Hitchcock stated that the entire employee manual had been in the last Council packet, and that there was one correction included in this packet. VanAllsburg stated that the City's employee benefits are extremely liberal, and asked whether this was standard for municipalities. Hitchcock stated that because there were fewer than ten non-union employees that their benefits were based on the lower of the two union groups' benefits.

Motion by **DeForest**, seconded by **Wittrup**, to approve the Employee Manual with the correction to policy #7.2. Yes: Zichi, DeForest, Wittrup, Davis, Monroe, VanAllsburg, Hanna. No: none. **Motion carried.**

d. Second Reading and Adoption of Ordinance 294 – Amendment to Zoning Ordinance

Hanna stated that Note P read "with the consent of the Fire Authority 40 feet," and that because NIESA does not have a ladder truck, this would automatically be turned down. Zichi stated that if developers would like higher buildings, they could help contribute to the purchase of the necessary equipment. Hanna stated that NIESA did not have anywhere to store a ladder truck at this time. Zichi stated that we have mutual aid agreements. Hanna stated that Meridian Township has a ladder truck.

Motion by **DeForest**, seconded by **Wittrup**, to approve Ordinance 294 as presented. Yes: Davis, DeForest, Hanna, Monroe, VanAllsburg, Wittrup, Zichi. No: none.

11. Discussion Items

a. Resolution 10-05 (09-05 on agenda) – Modifications in Water and Wastewater Rate Structure

City Manager Hitchcock stated that the Readiness-to-Serve charge and Billing charge had been combined. DeForest stated that he hopes it has a positive impact on seniors with fixed incomes.

b. Streetscape/Downtown Planning/Riverfront Appearance

Mayor Zichi stated that the Mill Stone will be set into the sidewalk near the old dam area with an interpretive kiosk with historical information as well as information on native plant species. He also stated that the Red Cedar Chapter of Wild Ones was donating native plants for the island.

c. Letter of Resignation from Larry Wittrup

Wittrup stated that he was relocating to the Adrian area to be closer to his family and that he had a great neighborhood in Williamston. Mayor Zichi stated that the Council had 60 days after the resignation became effective to appoint a replacement to Council, that candidates have to be registered voters living in the City of Williamston, and interested persons should fill out a board member application.

12. Correspondence Received / Information Only

Hanna mentioned that the Williamston Theatre Project would be giving a presentation at the Chamber of Commerce Breakfast on May 24th.

Zichi commented on the replacement tire swing that had been purchased by the Downtown Development Authority for the playscape in McCormick Park.

13. Staff Reports

a. City Manager

City Manager Hitchcock submitted a written report. She added that she will be on vacation from May 25th until May 31st.

b. City Attorney

No report.

c. Police Chief

Police Chief Ambs stated that four blocks on Putnam Street and part of Grand River would be blocked off on Memorial Day for the parade beginning at 10 a.m. He reminded people that the maximum height for grass or weeds in a yard is 12 inches. He thanked donors to the Police & Kids fund and stated that there will be a golf outing on July 30th.

d. Utilities Director

Utilities Director Smith submitted a written report.

14. Committee / Sub-Committee Reports

a. Legislative Director

DeForest submitted a written report and added that there were several House Bills of interest being considered at this time.

15. Audience Participation (non-agenda items)

There was no audience participation.

16. Council Member Comments

Monroe – pleased to have the Tennis Boosters at the meeting, and encouraged the City to work with them to repair the tennis courts.

Davis – asked if the Police Department could collect for the Police & Kids fund by standing in the street like the Fire Department does; also stated that people with kids at home during the summer should encourage them to help senior citizens by mowing their lawns.

DeForest – mentioned that a few of his neighbors on South Putnam had planted flowers along the road and encouraged others to as well.

Wittrup – concerned that if people are allowed to collect for fund raisers at the four corners someone will get hurt.

Hanna – it was a pleasure to be at the High School for the Teacher of the Year presentation.

VanAllsburg – the play “Bus Stop” performed at the Purple Rose Theater had won an award and had two talented Williamston residents involved in the production.

Zichi – pleased at how involved the Williamston Theatre Project already is in the community; encouraged attendance at the Memorial Day Parade.

17. Adjourn

Motion by **DeForest**, seconded by **Wittrup**, to adjourn. Voice vote all Yes.
Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Catherine Garnham, Executive Secretary

Kenneth V. Zichi, Mayor

Date approved: _____