

City of Blair Regular Council Meeting Minutes, July 6, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

A meeting of the Common Council of the City of Blair, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin, was duly called, noticed, held and conducted in the manner required by the Common Council and the pertinent Wisconsin Statutes on July 6, 2020. The Council President P. Syverson called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. The following members were present: Mayor A. Knutson (arrived at 6:45 pm); Alderpersons-W. Cartrette, T. Wheeler, J. Anderson, P. Syverson, M. Lisowski, C. Ekern, Police Chief R. Jensen, Clerk/Treasurer S. Frederixon, Attorney A. Robertson, Trempealeau County Times. Public in attendance: Nate Dahl, Jeremy Tranberg, Jamie & Mike Ressel, Judy Betker, Gwen Kidd.

Public Comment: David Mattison, representing the Blair Cheese Festival Board of Directors shared that after much careful discussion they will be cancelling the 2020 Cheese Festival due to concerns about spread of COVID-19. They do not feel they can safely and successfully do the event. There are some ideas about possibly doing some sort of smaller event, if COVID concerns improve. Information will be available on their website and Facebook page. It was a VERY difficult decision to make. Jynette Noren, 20 year resident on Mill Road expressed concerns about recent changes (last 3 years) to storm water runoff affecting their property, possibly from changes done by neighbors. Jynette showed pictures of issues and changes made to neighbor's property that may have affected water runoff (skid steer to make parking area/loads of wood chips added). It seems to be getting worse each year. The road by their home floods and in winter it freezes causing dangerous ice. She is wondering about a culvert being installed; hoping City will investigate. **Council verbally requested to have this topic on the next Street Committee meeting and have S.E.H. discuss with Committee.**

Present minutes for approval: Special Meeting on 5/20/20 & Regular Council Meeting 6/1/2020/ **Motion W. Cartrette to approve 5/20/20 & 6/1/20 minutes as presented, 2nd T. Wheeler. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved.**

Reports: Blair Police Department June 2020 report by Randy Jensen (interim Chief): 125 calls. Complaints: 4 traffic, 3 juvenile, 2 disorderly conduct w/1 arrest, 3 family domestic, 4 other agency assists, 1 burglary, 1 theft, 5 animal complaints, 2 car accidents, 3-EMS calls, 58 traffic stops, 3 suspicious vehicles, 1 Fire, 1 recovered property, 6 criminal damage, 1 stolen vehicle, 1 hit & run, 1 neighbor concern, 4 welfare checks. Damage to deer fence in June, still hoping public will keep alert and report any new information on this or other police issues. Rise in vandalism cases in City right now, many related to vehicle damage, scratching, slashed tires etc. also increased vandalism in the Park, please report any suspicious activity. Need to report our full time officer was exposed to COVID-19 during a police call. Jensen will be checking with County on correct protocol for that and if officers work schedule will be affected. Chief Jensen also reported squad vehicle doing ok, thanks to needed repairs done by Ekern Collision, hopefully good now until new squad arrives. Police Chief Interviews scheduled for Thursday, June 4th.

Park Committee Meetings 6/5, 6/12 & 6/29/20-Chairperson W. Cartrette reported: July 1 proposed pool opening. The Pool Committee developed protocols for safe opening related to COVID-19. Each person to get a single of family pass completes a general form for the pass information & also signs a Waiver of Liability relating to COVID-19/Coronavirus'. Included in the pool pass packet is a 4 page document of Trempealeau Pool COVID-19 Protocol & Guidelines. Complete contact information for all adults on passes is collected in case of illness and contact tracing needs. The June 12 meeting was pool committee & managers at the Aquatic Center painting deck with 'social distance' markers, cleaning and making preparations for opening. There was an electrical/motor equipment issue with the pool operation which caused the open date to be pushed out to tomorrow July 7. Now we are finding this weekend there is a problem with the new chemical system, but with some luck and help from Carrico we are hoping to open now July 8th. Revisit Park areas closed during Trempealeau County Health department, 'Severe Risk' time, use of ball fields, playground equipment, shelters, etc.

Motion C. Ekern to open all parts of the Park to public with posting of Health Department guidelines and ‘NOTICE of USE AT OWN RISK-CITY NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ILLNESS’ for users to have access to and then post at both entrances of which level of RISK for SPREAD of COVID we are in, 2nd W. Cartrette, Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved. Burbach Aquatic Phase III invoices # 8631 for \$995.96 and # 8636 for \$638 are the final amounts due to them, total of \$1,634.30. Park Chairperson Cartrette recommends payment of these. Wapasha Inc. the contractor still has an outstanding ‘retainage’ amount of \$26,000, not to be paid until final punch list items are completed and signed off on. **Motion M. Lisowski to pay the Burbach invoices as presented, 2nd J. Anderson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved. Request for Schroeder Shelter drive-by graduation party will be ok via the ‘use at own risk’ decision just made by Council. Bicycle Rider request to relax no tent restriction for bike event coming through City in July. **After much discussion Council decided they needed to stand by the rule they had from Health department of ‘only self-contained’ RV units and no showers open to public as we are not able to cover frequent cleaning. Clerk will inform riders.****

Blair Community Development Group on 6/11 & 6/18/20-Jeff Eide reported: Downtown Redevelopment Incentive Grant Policy (DRIG) was shared, purpose to encourage redevelopment and growth of new and rehabilitation of older buildings in downtown district. . Our Blair group has come up with the following ideas for the City to consider related to grants/incentives that could support local businesses. This information is not inclusive, but in draft form, a starting place that can get the ball rolling. Ideas/Incentives discussed: possibly having the water bill paid for a period of time; no property taxes for first year if purchase; use TID money to match a portion of improvements with 3 year commitment; City help promote Grand Opening via social media, etc.; purchase gift cards from new business to be handed out to community; work with local business for possible discount if purchase redevelopment items locally; use TID funds to help with cost to raze a building and improve outside appearance of current buildings; consider an Ordinance of similar type buildings to keep a theme in our downtown. Asking for Council to consider and let Committee know if would like more work on incentive type topics and have interest in these. **Council decided they would send this information to Finance Committee to decide what types of incentives might work for City, have it on 7/28/20 Finance Comm. Meeting agenda & invite Business Development Committee members also.** Mike & Jamie Ressel owners of property in B-1 district & members of Development Committee are in process of renovating building for a new business and find there is an active termite issue in building. After researching he believes there are at least 6 other buildings in downtown with same issue. Orkin estimate to treat issue is \$1,700 includes bore treating in blacktop around building the 1st year and \$300 annually after. Orkin says if I stop treating the neighbors termites will move back to my property. It will be a lifetime expense unless the City has some sort of investment in it or consider Ordinances that cover annual inspection of buildings and keep them in good condition. **Council wants to check if any state funds available for termite control, thoughts of a tax break...have Orkin attend 7/28/20 Tax, Finance Committee. Reminder from Fire Chief that if we treat downtown, we need to be mindful that we may push to residential, need to find that out from Orkin expert.**

Streets, Lights & Equipment Committee meeting on 6/25/20-P. Syverson reports: Park truck replacement was discussed, the truck Chris Ekern bid on @ Copart online auction went for \$100 above our approved \$6,000 amount. C. Ekern showed 4 examples of good used trucks for consideration. Committee is recommending the purchase of 2014 GMC, V6 (white), long box, 104,000 miles & toolbox @ \$12,500 (Ekern negotiated down from \$13,100) on hold at Clason’s in LaCrosse through tomorrow. **Motion P. Syverson to purchase the GMC truck recommended by Committee for not over \$13,500, 2nd T. Wheeler. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved.** Committee discussed Street Truck which is 03/05 with 75,000 miles with a few rust spots but otherwise in good condition.

Radar System upgrades to new squad vehicle: per Chief Jensen it needs upgrades to front and back systems, one is not working and wiring is in poor condition in other, very old system. New systems are more compact, with more line separation and do not need antenna. Cost of \$1,500 - \$2,000. Trempealeau County Sheriff's department does buy trade-ins refurbished. Committee recommends to upgrade radar system to new for new squad. Motion P. Syverson to upgrade radar in new squad to new, not to exceed \$2,000, funds from CIP fund, 2nd W. Cartrette. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved. Squad camera system hasn't been working for a few months and needed for liability reasons. Cost to replace estimated at \$3,000 - \$5,000, which includes a 4-5 year warranty and can be downloaded to thumb drive which is desirable. Committee recommend the purchase as presented. **Motion P. Syverson to purchase new camera system as presented up to \$5,000, with fund from CIP fund, 2nd W. Cartrette. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved.** Committee also talked about the lift station generator (had bid for \$4,200 @ Blair on line auction; City had a \$10,000 reserve) and Park truck that we have and need to sell. Council request Clerk to have these items on 'sealed bid' sale & contact generator jockey of sale.

S.E.H. report/2020 Drainage project update-Dave Schofield: Contractor had basically completed project, will be some additional restoration and we have a pay request on agenda that includes 5 % retainage for that. We did look at the Council's previous concerns with drainage pattern down stream of Olson Street culvert and found drainage could easily be provided from ponded area on Dahl property to wetland on Swenson property by way of a swale across Anderegg property. It appears from aerial images (provided to Council) this drainage route previously existed but was modified by grading on the Anderegg property sometime between 2000 and 2017. **Motion J. Anderson to pay Erickson Excavating LLC the amount presented of \$47,733.79, out of Street CIP fund, 2nd P. Syverson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved.** Request for Clerk/Treasurer to put Olson Street drainage issue on next Street Committee meeting for review.

Water/Sewer Committee Meeting on 7/1/2020-T. Wheeler reports: Ehler's Inc. went through final draft of '2020 Long Range Sewer Rate Study'. This was requested by Council because our sewer fund needs to address inflationary increases to inside customers, there have been 5 years of negative operating income and negative cash flow 1/1/2015 to 12/31/2019. Purpose of study is to develop fair & equitable and self-sustaining rate structure for future. Process of this study was to determine revenue requirements, cost of service and rate design. Key findings: Determined percentage each category of customers contributes, amount of outstanding debt as of 12/31/2019, future projects identified, consider cash balance and 2020 revenue requirements. Presented 2 alternatives for Committee to consider basically one is an 'all at once' increase', the other is a four step increases plan. **Committee recommends meeting with our largest user and customer AMPI as they contribute 82 % toward this fund to go over this information prior to bringing to full Council for review and decision.**

Hi Crush Blair news release: Clerk Frederixon notified of a press release stating due to a sharp and rapid decline driven by decrease in crude oil prices & overall oilfield activity (mostly caused by OPEC and other oil producing nations) and impacts to demand associated with emerging COVID-19 pandemic, they expect to file for protection from its creditors under the United States Bankruptcy Code. We did have a visit from a representative of Hi Crush saying they are restructuring debt, expect these issues at this time to not affect our current agreement with Blair. The Company will hopefully be more 'viable' and still hopes to return to the area for mining activity. They felt the hardest part was losing the great staff that worked with them. I have verified with our Zoning Administrator and Attorney on our financial assurance documents are in place for 2020.

Building Permits: Sophia Henandez-Lopez @ 502 E. Broadway St for pool; Owen Berg @ 310 S. Park Rd for 8 x12 garden shed; Tyler Palkowski @ 103 E. 2nd St for a pool; Waumandee State Bank @ 123 S. Urberg Ave for new sign; Jamie Kamrowski @ 117 S. Spring St for a pool; Lorraine Loken @ 515 E. Olson St for privacy fence;

Scott Semb @ 616 E. Center Street, Lot 13 for a pool. **Motion P. Syverson to approve all as presented, 2nd C. Ekern. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved.**

Need County Permits: Ella Mae Hansen @ 631 E. Taft St for driveway improvements & window replacement; Sue Prothero @ 324 S. Pearl St for downsizing window; Scott Pooler @ 907 E. Broadway St for new front & back steps & deck steps; Jared Peterson @ 110 E. 5th St for deck; Steve Nyen @ 639 E. Center St for a 18'x 24' accessory building; Shannon Dickenson @ 330 S. Pearl St for new small deck and roof awning over steps/added to June 1 approved permit. **Motion C. Ekern to approve all with the requirement of County permits fulfilled and \$100 fine attached to Pooler permit for work being done prior to obtaining a permit, 2nd P. Syverson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved.**

Clerk report: P Syverson request for information on accessory shed property tax valuation on permanent with foundation vs. building on skids. Per City Assessor, buildings without a foundation or on skids are still subject to property taxes. There is not much of a difference, mostly depends on size of building, if building is small, 10' x 12' for example maybe only a few hundred dollars in assessed value. C. Ekern request for information on fence materials used in City: Our Ordinance defines fences to consist of vegetation, wood, stone or metal. In the future I will work to get more detailed fence material information on building permits; big thank you to Lions Club for labor to paint the Schroeder Shelter interior, it looks much better. Thank you to the Public Works guys for the difficult and expert job of preparing the shelter for painting; Both Debi and I have to renew our Notary Public credentials every 4 years and are required to study and pass a test with at least a 90% correct scores; happy to say we both passed with 100% correct. The Notary Public service is a service City provides at no cost to customers; Fireworks Committee did a good job of respecting COVID-19 recommendations, much appreciated; sad to say our oldest male deer Einer passed away June 22 of unknown causes; a CWD test is required and in progress; happily we welcomed a new fawn on June 20th, seems to be healthy and happy; deer fence is in process of being repaired.

Present Vouchers for review and approval: **Motion W. Cartrette to approve the vouchers as presented, 2nd C. Ekern. Discussion: None. Vote: C. Ekern-Yes, P. Syverson-Yes, J. Anderson-Yes, T. Wheeler-Yes, W. Cartrette and M. Lisowski-Yes. Motion approved.**

Next Council meeting is August 3, 2020 @ 6:30 pm.

Motion C. Ekern to enter into closed session 19.85(1)(c) for purpose of discussions of employee probationary performance evaluation, 2nd J. Anderson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved.

Motion C. Ekern to return to open session, 2nd J. Anderson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-6, No-0. Motion approved.

Action taken out of closed session: **None.**

Motion J. Anderson to adjourn meeting, 2nd W. Cartrette. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes-5, No-0. Motion approved. (M. Lisowski out of room)