

## City of Blair Regular Council Meeting Minutes, February 3, 2020 at 7:00 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 February 3, 2020. The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following members were present: Mayor A. Knutson; Alderpersons-W. Cartrette, T. Wheeler, J. Anderson, P. Syverson, C. Ekern, M. Lisowski, Clerk/Treasurer S. Frederixon, Attorney A. Robertson, Trempealeau County Times.

Mayor Knutson announced Chief of Police, Tim Wheeler will retire, with 20 years of service to the City of Blair, with his last day to be February 20, 2020. Mayor spoke for the entire council and Tim's co-workers when he thanked Chief Wheeler for his service to the City and that he will be missed. He is wished health, happiness and success as he enters into the next phase of his life. Also, full time officer for the last 3 years, Mark Spaeth has given his notice to end employment with the City effective February 9, 2020. Many thanks to Mark and best wishes to him also.

Clerk Report: Frederixon reported on research done related to 'public comment' section of our meetings-information received from League of WI Municipalities: Public comments at council meetings are not required by state statute, although this council at this time, finds they can provide valuable chances for constituents to offer feedback on matters in the community. The WI League of Municipalities does suggest a time limit and to move lengthy topics to a committee or later meeting where notice can be given to public. Public comment topics really can't be restricted by a council out of respect for the public's "right to free speech"; generally the public should not be allowed to speak at Council meetings outside of public comment section. The governing body does have power to preserve order at meetings and to punish by fine persons present for disorderly conduct. Disorderly persons may also be removed; keeping in mind they are not to be removed if they are stating calmly a different opinion, but only if their conduct is disorderly. The City will have a Spring Primary Election, February 18<sup>th</sup>, ballot will be for Justice of the Supreme Court. City Audit is upon us. Debi and I tend to try to meet the challenging things head on and get them done ASAP, so we usually take the earliest offered dates from Baker Tilly the City auditors. Every year I wonder "what was I THINKING"? Since January is truly our busiest month with taxes, it is never easy to get all the items prepared for their visit, but it seems to happen. We have been preparing the last couple of weeks for the preliminary audit which is TOMMORROW☺, and also for the full week audit which is set for week of February 17<sup>th</sup>. Baker/Tilly is so great to work with and at explaining what they need from us. The office will have limited availability for public during the audit visits. The best value for the tax payers is if Debi and I are able to work with them as they need while they are here and quickly answer their questions or locate items. As done when Officer Larson left the City, per City Council Directive, July 2016 to have a 3 officer Police department, ads for Full Time Police Chief and Full time officer will be placed this week. Source Energy Services 2019 royalties were received at the City, January 25, 2020, in the amount of \$187,784.24...we are very thankful for these royalties which are far above the minimum requirement of \$100,000.00. We hope they have a very successful 2020. I spoke with HI Crush last week and we expect our 1<sup>st</sup> annual \$300,000.00 payment yet this week. Per the agreement, this payment is promised annually in January while operations are conducted in Blair.

Public Comment: Tim Robertson, Blair resident, spoke on topic of recent police department vacancies, allowing an opportunity for the council to work with citizens on a mutual decision on how we want to do law enforcement in Blair going forward. While he was on council it was a frequent topic, that people get worked up about. He suggests that we develop a commission or at least a process that will directly involve citizens into the shaping of the policy. Whether, 2, 3 or 4 officer operation, whatever the council and citizens decide, it would be wise to take time to do right, shape how much coverage, how much interaction, what do we want law enforcement to be doing on their workday...if you put a commission together and hire a chief, that commission could assist the Chief of

Police and council to hire as needed going forward. Police/Ordinance meeting information was shared with Tim Robertson as a public hearing for this. Travis Armitage/Blair resident/Fire Chief, feels it is important we continue to have a Police department as a face in our community, whether that is adding new officers or working with

county. He doesn't see us having any less problems than we currently have. Feels it is important that the City Council have the authority to regulate the police department and how they operate, so maybe a commission is important if that would allow for ability of more oversight. Jeremy Tranberg also spoke, he would like to have more friendly interactions with the Police department, go around and check in with businesses, develop a relationship. Previous officers have done it, I feel many businesses would appreciate that. Emily Lee/Trempealeau Co. District Attorney Office spoke, District Attorney Sacia wanted the Council to know he feels with the large amount of serious violent/felony type crimes that come to his office from Blair, it is very important the Council continue a strong police department, to avoid even more serious problems. Jordan Pride, full time officer spoke, would be happy to become more involved with community. This department is understaffed and that cannot happen, having a Chief and extra officer would allow him time to implement some of the community interaction ideas he has and also ideas from council and residents. These additional officers would allow time for things like a Facebook page, weather alerts, and notice of upcoming events, presentations on bike safety, on line safety, school and church interactions. Really need 3 officer department.

Present minutes for approval: Regular Council Meeting 1/6/20. **Motion W. Cartrette to approve 1/6/20 minutes as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by J. Anderson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.**

Ehlers Financial Management Planning: Clerk/Treasurer Frederixon asked the council to consider having Ehler's bring a 'proposal' for a 5-10 year financial plan for the City. This Council has been actively working to improve our City, and have taken on some larger types of projects that have done just that... 2019 Infrastructure project on Main, Immell and Oak Streets and new Aquatic Center. We are currently looking at Lake Dredge and long term management, Downtown Revitalization and long-term management, we will need to do large Infrastructure projects regularly going forward to upgrade failing water/wastewater mains, there has been discussions of a new fire station. The City is financial strong, but it might be a good idea to have a good plan in place for future large project budgeting, so we can plan when these projects are best suited to the City budgets with least impact to resident tax levies. Ehler's can professionally, consider our TID's and how and when they fit in our plans, all revenue streams including how the Source Energy and HiCrush royalty payments can help with plans and impact of borrowing and when and if that is a path for us. Brian Reilly, from Ehlers the City of Blair financial management firm, presented a general outline of what is included with a 'long term plan' prepared by them. Brian Reilly/Ehlers explained information related to a financial plan for City. Helps coordinate capital planning with budgeting. Consider fund balance for general operating, consider levy limits impacts. Helps identify priority of projects from a capital project standpoint. Layout an effective budgeting plan so we might have level of comfort on what we might be able to pay cash for on projects. City has a healthy financial base. This plan would help align financial management with desired plan outcomes. Very helpful with annual budgeting. **Motion by W. Cartrette to ask Ehlers to prepare a proposal for a 'long term financial plan' related to large budget items in the City future. 2<sup>nd</sup> by C. Ekern. Discussion: Estimated cost? Scope of work of approximately \$10,000 - \$20,000, hard to estimate at this point. May be small updates from time to time. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.**

**Reports:** Blair Police Department January 2020 report/Randy Jenson: Reminder, in January we usually did not have an officer on duty during the day shift. Officer Jenson reported 5 animal complaints, 16-911 calls, 1 burglary, 2 ambulance, 11 assist other law enforcement, 1 animal bite, 1 vandalism, 1 civil, 1 community event, 1 control burn, 2 disorderly conduct, 2 domestic disturbance, 1 fraud, 1 juvenile, 1 harassment, 1 loss property, 7 miscellaneous, 2 miscellaneous traffic (parking complaints, etc.), 1 missing person, 1 road debris, 1 sex offense, 1 suspicious vehicle, 2 theft, 1 vehicle slide in, 1 warrant service, 63 traffic stops of these stops only 4 citations, 4 welfare checks. There were 11 calls that we had no officer to respond to and another agency responded, burglary,

domestic disturbance, couple of EMS calls, juvenile run away, couple of 911 calls. Call breakdown by time frame, reminder that many times we didn't have a day officer, so these numbers are skewed somewhat: Midnight to 8 - 20 calls, 8 am to 4 pm - 21 calls, 4 pm to midnight - 95 calls.

Park/Lake Committee on 1/6/2020 Chairperson W. Cartrette reported: Rita Borreson request for Memorial Flag pole/raised flower bed in Park in memory of her daughter Lori Gonzalez. She needs to gather more information and they will review again before going to full council. Lake Committee is working on capital campaign planning at this point. Looking for more members to be actively involved in process, hoping to send out a tri fold pamphlet with Lake Fund budget. Wanda has created a Lake Henry project 'Facebook' page, currently about 70 followers. It is about raising money at this point.

Blair Community Development Group Meeting on 1/7/2020 C. Ekern reported: Decided to sign up for 'Connect Communities Program', statewide program to allow for collaboration and networking with other communities working on realization projects. Developed a smaller panel within group that will spearhead some of the administrative duties to keep the group organized and moving forward. Chris agreed to be a member of that panel. Code enforcement was discussed, group supportive of information related to City plans to have access to 'code enforcement' inspectors for commercial buildings soon. Questions about possibility of 'razing' of buildings if needed. Some discussions about Street level apartment currently in our B-1 district. Chamber is working on a directory of current businesses in City.

Police/Ordinance Committee Meeting on 1/9/2020 Chairperson C. Ekern reported: Reviewed the following Ordinances - 42.03 & 42.05, Tobacco Products changed to include vapor products, Committee recommends to full council that the change be approved. **Motion by J. Anderson to approve change as presented, except with age changed to 21(per federal law).** 37.01 Parking on City Streets, change to include 'recreational/camper type vehicles may park for five continuous days on City streets ', Committee recommends to full council this change be approved. **Motion by W. Cartrette to approve change to Ordinance 37.01 as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by P. Syverson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.** Committee had no problem with residents having camper stored nicely in their personal yard. Chapter 17 Fire Ordinance change to include volunteer fireman dismissal policy- at this point holding for further information from Fire Chief/Attorney Robertson (committee was supportive of change at this point), Ordinance 46.04 Rental Apartments on Street level in B-1 District, change to remove street level rental apartments as a secondary use, no street level apartments will be permitted going forward, Committee recommends to full council to approve this change. Current street level apartment ok at this point, but further discussion is expected. Ordinance 46.09 'Use restrictions in Residential Districts as follows/change to include 'Further, the accessory structures shall be aesthetically consistent with the appearance of principal structures.' Committee recommends to full council this change be approved. **Motion by M. Lisowski to approve change as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by C. Ekern. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.** Committee wishes to discuss further Police Chief position/hiring at later date. Ordinance 46.04 B-1 Downtown District Street level rentals-lots of discussion but no action at this point. Hoping to have property owners with downtown street level rentals to Business Economic Development meeting for open discussions. Mid-range building inspector discussion was table for more information at later date.

Business & Economic Development Committee meeting on 1/29/2020/Chairperson C. Ekern reported: discussion about code enforcement related to street level apartments in B-1 downtown district. City is in preliminary discussions with code enforcement of Mid-range and commercial Inspection Company out of Black River Falls, but need more information, to come at later date. Lots of discussion around downtown revitalization planning. During those discussions, **committee decided to recommend to full council to remove the Conditional Use Permit allowing street level apartments in the B-1 downtown/commercial district effective immediately or**

**ASAP.** Other discussion was to have combination meetings with Police/Ordinance and Business & Economic Development Committee meetings with current landlords of street level apartment's opportunity to discuss, be involved in discussions, those meetings are yet to be scheduled at this point. Connect Community Program was discussed. Chamber was working to identify current available buildings in B-1 district. Information shared that one property owner said if his building would have been business ready he most likely would have it filled as he had been contacted by 7 interested parties and they have all started businesses in other areas. Wildcat development residential district information request for planning purposes. School would like committee to put together power point presentation for students, showing downtown when it was vibrant, and then asking students for ideas, suggestions on what they would like to see.

Landlords requesting clarification & consideration on Ordinance 46.04 proposed revisions: property owners of buildings in the B-1 Business/commercial District that currently have 'street level apartments' were in attendance. The expressed concern over the following issues: Their apartments were a 'permitted use' per the City Ordinance in place at the time, and they feel if the Ordinance is to change in the future their apartments legally need to be 'grandfathered' in. City Attorney Alan Robertson agreed with that statement. They stated they purchased these properties and put many thousands of dollars in to the buildings, and consider them as a 'business'. While they understand and support the idea of revitalization downtown, they began their street level apartments in compliance with City Ordinances at the time and want to be able to continue with previously approved residential units. Other concerns were most of the programs for new businesses require ownership of the property, so if someone wants to put a business in these landlord's downstairs properties, they will not qualify because they are renting. Also, if no longer allowed, property owners feel they would be entitled to property tax credit. Concern was also expressed if much work is put into downtown revitalization project and then the City decided to move forward with previously discussed 4<sup>th</sup> street bypass project, which would bypass the downtown. Lot of things to consider on this topic. City Council explained at this point City Council Business & Economic Development and Ordinance Committees are discussing changing that Ordinance to 'effective immediately no additional street level apartments will be allowed in the B-1 Downtown Business/Commercial district'. Current street level apartments are in discussion stages also, no formal recommendations have been made to full council and these property owners are welcomed to participate in the upcoming discussions. **Motion by W. Cartrette to direct Attorney Robertson to draft a change to Ordinance 46.04, to remove the conditional use provision for street level apartments in the B-1 Business/Commercial District effective the date approved by full council, no additional street level apartments going forward, 2<sup>nd</sup> by C. Ekern. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.**

**S.E.H. Engineering Report:** David Schofield-2020 Drainage Improvements BID opening 1-29-20, had 6 BIDs ranging from \$47,000 to \$86,000. We recommend construction contract be awarded to Erickson Excavating, LLC of Whitehall, WI contingent on receipt of all required bonding and insurance documents. Erickson had the lowest BID of \$47,262.09. Engineering estimated was \$67,200. We believe the City received competitive & comparable bids and Erickson Excavating is a competent contractor. Estimated to start in April and done by July 4, 2020. Also in packets today is the S.E.H. Amendment #1 to Supplemental Letter Agreement dated 9/9/2019 for 'consultant work on Olson Street Storm Drainage Construction Engineering Services.' Estimated amount of \$6,300. **Motion by W. Cartrette to award BID for 2020 Drainage Improvement project to Erickson Excavating, LLC as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by P. Syverson. Discussion: Erickson has worked on this swale for City before. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.**

Tax, Finance & Personnel Meeting on 1/29/2020/Chairperson J. Anderson reported Andrew Dannehy, Trempealeau Co. Times had some questions related to a couple of Public Records requests the Times had for the

City of Blair in the recent past. Communication gap was experienced related to those request. Andrew also felt the City agendas need to be available much earlier than the end of the day the Friday before the meetings and that the public is entitled to a more descriptive 'closed session' agenda line item so people can attend meeting on topics as important as the Police Chief issue. Andrew D. brought to attention of Committee he does much business with all area municipalities and feels our City Clerk's workload has increased with constant 'in office' traffic, high levels of email workload and phone request, with little quiet work time to complete tasks available and that can cause delays in response to his Records Requests, last minute agendas, etc. most entities have City Administrators that would handle those types of request as well as a Clerk/Treasurer and Deputy, many also have a Utility Clerk. After much good discussion in an attempt to improve communications and efficiency of office staff, this Committee is recommending to full council to approve a monthly meeting deadline of Tuesday's at noon the week prior to the meeting with the agenda to be posted on Wednesday the week prior to the meeting. Limiting office hours to 4 days per week with one day closed to public for office staff work day. Closed session would change to include more detail if possible and approved by legal counsel. Clerk/Treasurer Frederixon stated Wednesday's might the best day for the 'work day', this would allow full day availability on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for customers that like to stop in after mail pick up at 9 am for needs, and keep in mind being open until 4:30 late day customers. Most customer needs can be met by purchase of bags at Kwik Trip and Express Mart, bills can be put in drop box or paid on line, phone messages can be left for questions and be answered after 3:00 pm on Wednesdays, email should be ok to keep up with on Wednesday's. **Motion by M. Lisowski to approve 3 month trial basis on closing to public on Wednesday's effective 2/19/2020, revisit at June 2020 meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> by C. Ekern. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.** Agenda deadline topic: Concern over shortening time for Committee meeting reports to make agenda, suggestion to add all committees to each agenda so able to report if needed. **Motion by P. Syverson to approve deadline for monthly regular city meeting of Tuesday at 4:30 pm the week prior to the meeting with agenda to be posted by Wednesday, 4:30 pm the week prior to meeting date, 2<sup>nd</sup> by W. Cartrette. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.** Electronic meeting iPad purchase discussion, we budgeted \$1500 and with an estimated \$800 paper saving cost we have \$2,300, but after research it will be closer to \$3,500 for iPads. Committee recommends to purchase 8 instead of 10 and use general fund undesignated funds to cover additional costs. **Motion by W. Cartrette to purchase 8 iPads and use budgeted \$ and undesignated general fund to cover additional costs as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by C. Ekern. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.** Committee was just made aware of Officer Spaeth resignation, no action on that topic.

Randy Obieglo was not able to make this meeting.

Building Permits: No building permits submitted.

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

**Next Council meeting is March 2, 2020 @ 7:00 pm**

**Motion C. Ekern to adjourn meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> M. Lisowski. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.**

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Susan Frederixon-Clerk/Treasurer