

City of Blair Regular Council Meeting Minutes, February 1, 2021 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 February 1, 2021. The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The following members were present: Mayor A. Knutson; Alderpersons-T. Wheeler, J. Anderson, P. Syverson, M. Lisowski & C. Ekern, Clerk S. Frederixon, Trempealeau County Times

Mayor Ardell Knutson reported he had 2 well respected residents step up to say they would be interested in being appointed to complete Wanda Cartrette' s term. After careful consideration he is appointing Dennis Stephenson to complete the Ward 1 Alderperson term until April 2022. Mayor asked for a motion to do this, **Motion by C. Ekern to approve Mayor's Ward 1 appointment as presented, 2nd by P. Syverson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 5, No 0. Motion approved.**

Public Comment: None

Present minutes for approval: Regular 1/4/2021. **Motion by J. Anderson to approve 1/4//2021 Regular Meeting minutes as presented, 2nd by C. Ekern. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 5, No 0. Motion approved.**

Hi Crush is asking us to review and consider a reduction in the reclamation Bond, the asked us to push this topic to our March meeting to allow time for City Zoning and Attorney to review information and prepare recommendations. **Motion by C. Ekern to table this topic until March 1 meeting, 2nd T. Wheeler. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 5, No 0. Motion approved.**

S.E.H. Engineering Report/David Schofield: quick overview of Broadway Street project, completed topographical survey & barely started design. Question to work on is how to maintain traffic 'east & west' during project. One thought was to do work in stages for Park Road could be used during 1st part, and Taft Street for 2nd half of project. If project split in 2 parts cost more money to bring back paving and concrete companies, etc. Would allow to maintain access with short detour. Other option is to 'bite the bullet' and have a detour out to 95 so project can be completed with most efficiency and least expense, not ideal. We realize a detour can be posted, but many will try to cut through Simmon's Management property. Street Committee talked with Simmon's Management owners about building a road with their permission up to City standard as a 2nd East/West corridor for the City. Simmon's was willing to discuss, and allow research in to the possibility. David Schofield found Taylor Street (platted in 1872) and a right of way, and also found between 1872 and the 60's the right-of-way may have been vacated. Taylor Street would be a perfect extension for this corridor. The only way to find out is have a 'title search' done for 7 properties in that area, Lisowski, Saxe, Mattson, Flynn & couple Simmons parcels. Title work would tell us, if 'R.O.W.' is vacated or not, if it is and we want to proceed with project we would have to 're-buy' the R.O.W... Susan said J & D. Abstract can help with Title Search. Paul Syverson shared Street Committee Meeting information that Simmon's had been thinking of building apartment building on grassy field. There is an existing 8 " water main through Simmons property, which is bigger than the Broadway water main which is 4 ".

'The Barnyard Tavern' application was presented for review and approval for publication: **Motion by C. Ekern to approve for publication as presented, 2nd P. Syverson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 5, No 0. Motion approved.** Owner/Operator Mr. David Donnelly stated he has done some painting, small upgrades. Wishes to have a calm atmosphere, meals & drinks family day, party in evenings. Clean, simple, later would like to offer breakfast, tea & coffee.

Reports: Police Department : Chief Johnson reported, Working more on 'alternate side parking' Ordinance enforcement, Connor continue to train and is doing well, recent thefts in our area are being investigated and going well as it draws to an end, there will be a 'press release' done. Been doing much research on our Police department internet security & software support short comings. Working with MCS Networks Company on this. There is a

required 'audit' done in P.D. every couple years. Trying to find out where the Blair department stands with submitting that 'audit. I have found out Blair has many violations related to audit. Still looking into how we become 'in compliance'. One estimate was approximately \$20,000 of unbudgeted funds, \$12,000 of that is equipment/hardware with \$8,000 for annual support services. Services include back up of all files, 24/7 support where they log on and assist with all P.D. and squad computers, maintaining squad video system, body cams, records management, we are nowhere near in compliance now. "Our current 'IT' firm is not legally allowed to touch our P.D. computers", per Chief Johnson. As I get more answers maybe we can work on compliance over a couple of years. Chief wants to contact Arcadia motors about replacing our 2020 squad, believe it will have same problems as the last squad, due to emissions system failure, catalytic converter troubles, the electronics drain battery and squad has needed a jump start 3 times already, door won't open if battery is dead. Durango could be quite a bit less than current squad. Alderman Lisowski suggested checking with dealer where current squad was purchased for possible trade options. Council ok with Chief researching options. Street Department/Randy Ekern: lots of snow plowing & street widening, washing of vehicles & equipment, worked with Dorner company to upgrade municipal dam gates 7 & 9, light fixed on Ambulance shed, take down of Christmas decorations, assisted with sewer issue at downtown business, new tires on pick up, work on 4th street/Hillcrest road after water main break, ordered a rolodex file and worked to improve department efficiency, cross training & communications, installed bin in Street shop to organize bolts, screw, nuts, etc. for improved organization in department. Water/Waste Water Department/Bob Fraust: Monthly Water report to DNR, Daily testing of Drinking water, Assist with snow removal/sidewalks, all water/sewer areas & east end plowing when needed, Back wash of City water systems twice a week, Meter change outs, fixing bad meters with bad reads, washed pick up 3 times, facilitated tree clear out at west water storage tank(required by DNR), Chemical mixing & repairs/maintenance of pumps, Had to replace a pump, worked 4 days with engineers on main lift station maintenance & repairs of fine screen system. Park Superintendent report/Brian Jahr: - things are going well in Park, Ice Skating Rink seems to be a hit, lot of people using it, taken extra time to keep in skating shape with warming and cooling weather. Thanks to Chad Steine, for donating a skating training unit he made, works super. I used Chad's design and made a smaller one. Snow plowing going well. Using down time to inspect picnic tables, numbering them & put them on a spreadsheet. Also tightening bolts & painting wooden tables & cleaning and painting the metal garbage cans so ready for spring opening. Washed the Grey snowplow truck and park pick-up a couple times to remove salt, etc...

Tax, Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting on 1/19/2021/J. Anderson, Chairperson: Most of meeting was in 'closed session' to interview 4 Law firms for City Attorney position. Out of 'closed session', Committee is recommending Radcliffe Law Office S.C out of Black River Falls to fill the City Attorney position. Radcliffe Law charges are \$195.00 per hour, committee recommends going with the hourly rate the 1st year, instead of an annual 'retainer' so they can compare and consider retainer next year if makes sense financially, willing to attend all meetings as requested, 3 attorney law firm, seemed to be best fit in Committees minds, all firms were similar rates & well qualified. **Motion by P. Syverson, to hire Radcliffe Law Office S.C as the City of Blair Attorney effective immediately @ \$ 195.00 per hour rate, 2nd by T. Wheeler. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 5, No 0. Motion approved.**

Street, Lights & Equipment Committee meeting on 1/21/21/P. Syverson Chairperson: Members Present: Paul Syverson, Terry Wheeler and Chris Ekern. Also Present: Dave Schofield, Brian Jahr, Brian Simmons, and Gary Simmons. Committee discussed various options for a 2nd traffic through-way for the City. Brian & Gary Simmons were present to listen to the options that could involve their property. Dave Schofield of SEH presented the Options: 1. Use Highway 95 going east to South River Road to come back into the City. This option seemed to be time consuming. 2. We could do the Broadway Project in Phases. This way, Broadway could stay open for some of the time. The phases could be Pearl to Park and Park to Knutson, etc. Brian Jahr said the Fire Department

had timed driving through the Park. It would take an extra 3 minutes which is not acceptable for the Fire Department. 3. Extend Taft Street. This would involve going through the Simmons Property. Dave Schofield explained what would be involved with this option. This would produce 5 Lots on the north side that could be used for Residential construction. Cost would be \$187,300. It would also involve about a block of Sewer at a cost of \$55,000. Total cost would be \$242,300. There appears to be a Water Main already going through their property and is larger than the Main that is on Broadway. Also in this option in the concern with the street between Porter and Park being quite narrow. 4. This option would be to negotiate with Simmons to use their Parking Lot just as an interim route. There seems to be a lot of traffic going through that lot already and the lot is not in very good condition. We would have to maintain the Parking Lot to make it usable. 5. This option would be to extend 4th Street all the way east. Mr. Scofield said this could be a project for the future, but would not be done to incorporate into the Broadway Project. His estimate for this extension would be 5,000 feet at \$550 a foot for a total of \$2.7 million dollars. 6. This option would be to extend Center Street east to meet with Park Street. There would have to be some figuring to get past Allied's lot and also the properties that would be involve. The Committee discussed these options and could not come to a conclusion. Dave Schofield suggested hiring an appraiser and Title Company to check title and search for easements and ownership regarding the Taft Street extension. Next on the agenda the Committee discussed the 2021 CDBG Street/Infrastructure Project. Mr. Schofield updated the Committee on the project. He showed a topographical survey. SEH is at about 30% on the plans. He will work on an updated cost estimate. The Grant application is due the end of May with construction to begin in 2022 and completion in the fall of 2023. One thing that is not included in the price is the bridge on Broadway by the Fire Station. The Committee then discussed the Truck Parking Issue. Discussed were the lots east and north of the Pape Bus garages on the east end of the City. These would all be off of Webster Street. We would have to find out who owns all these areas. We would have to excavate and put in gravel or it could be paved. Brian Jahr discussed the snowplowing of this area. He felt a push plow would be needed. The Committee authorized Brian to find out pricing of a push plow. Also discussed was the Countryside Coop Lot to the north on Gilbert, but was decided those parcels have recently been purchased. Meeting was adjourned at 7:31 pm.

Blair Business Development Group meeting on 1/21/21/C. Ekern Treasurer: Arrow Shopper presented information on how the Arrow Shopper can help us promote business in Blair. Arrow shopper is very interested in being involved with improving our downtown and assisting businesses. Karla will be working on a packet of information to send the group members with advertising ideas that can be adapted to specific needs of our businesses and has already accepted to attend the remaining BDG meetings for 2021. Chris stated we are really hoping for better attendance, but realize with COVID and winter it is difficult.

Clerk report: 2/16/2021 Primary election will be in Blair, ballot will have State School Board and City Mayor races. We have had 3 longtime residents 'step up' willing to accept the challenging position of Mayor ... **Paul Syverson**/long time President of the City Council, Ward 3 Alderperson and Chairman of Street, Equipment and Lights Committee and current Trempealeau County Clerk, **Chris Ekern**/long time business owner in the City, longtime Ward 1 Alderperson and Chairman for our Business and Development & Police/Ordinance Committees, **John Rawson**, longtime business owner in City and current manager of our Dollar General Store. Annual Audit set for week of 2/22/2021, Debi has put lots of time preparing for it. Tax Collection: Thank you to all residents' property and business owners for their Real Estate and Personal Property taxes which are a giant part of what keeps our City running, a good place to live and do business. It is a lot of money to come up with every January and appreciated. ☺ Anyone who pays in installments, the 2nd half will now go to the Trempealeau County Treasurer in Whitehall. Annual Source Energy Royalty payment: I have been in contact with SES and we expect that check soon. Agreement states minimum of \$100,000.00. With the difficult times Source Energy Services has had to endure in 2020, I expect it to be the \$100,000, previous years they have done even more.

Thank you to them for finding a way to keep employees working and be able to do the annual amount. Annual Hi-Crush Annexation Agreement payment: The City office received the 2nd annual \$300,000.00 payment last week from Hi-Crush. Thank you to the Company's new management for finding a way to meet the agreement amount and to Ron Rogness/Hi Crush Communications Officer for keeping the City informed. We know this company has also endured serious hardship this past year and hope business conditions improve enough for to them returning to full production in 2021 if possible. Deer in the Park update: Sad to announce, that because of 2 positive TB tests (taken during required testing), the State required and assisted us with euthanizing of Hulda the oldest doe in the Park enclosure, this happened 1/20/21. She was Mom to both the buck and doe currently there. The State will give the City \$1,000 for her and then do testing and tracing on her for the why and where she might have gotten TB. In the end they may even find out she didn't even have it, but for some reason tested positive. It will be 3-4 months before we get more answers, until then they will keep us informed. Early autopsy results showed, there is a good chance the young deer will be ok. We are also making sure our employees will get any risk evaluated. At this time the State tells us there is nothing to do on those fronts. Drove by the City Hall on Sunday, 1/23/21, and there was Jim Nyen shoveling the City Hall out to help the guys out. Bob Fraust was out of town for the snow plowing, so they were short. He did a super job and was a big help. Sounds like Jim.

Building permits: Patrick Tulus @ 325 S. Urberg Avenue for annual pool permit-they understand the Ordinance guidelines and we have had no issues; Blair Car Wash LLC @ 504, 507, 509 4th Street for Garage door replacement, minor electrical upgrades and possibly solar panels-this permit would require to be reviewed, approved and inspected by G.E.C. our City building inspector. **Motion by C. Ekern to approve Tulus permit as presented and Blair Car Wash LLC, contingent on approval/inspection from G.E.C, 2nd by T. Wheeler. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 5, No 0. Motion approved.**

Clerk request Council to allow Clerk to approve pool permits, similar to fire permit which are already approved by Clerk, rather than have them as an agenda item at meetings/**Motion by P. Syverson to allow Clerk to approve pool permits in Clerk office, 2nd by T. Wheeler. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 5, No 0. Motion approved.**

Present vouchers for review/approval: **Motion by C. Ekern to approve vouchers as presented, 2nd J. Anderson. Discussion: None. Vote: Paul-Yes, Jill-Yes, Mike-Yes, Terry-Yes, Chris-Yes. Motion approved.**

Next Council meeting is March 1, 2021 @ 6:30 pm

Motion C. Ekern to adjourn meeting, 2nd J. Anderson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 5, No 0. Motion approved.

Susan Frederixon-Clerk/Treasurer