

City of Blair Regular Council Meeting Minutes, November 8, 2021

Mayor John Rawson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Open meeting requirements verified. Attendance roll call: Mayor J. Rawson-yes, P. Syverson-yes, C. Ekern-yes, D. Stephenson-yes, T. Wheeler-yes, M. Lisowski-yes, and J. Anderson-yes. Others attending: Attorney M. Radcliffe, Treasurer/Clerk/Deputy Treasurer S. Frederixon. Trempealeau County Times, Brian Jahr, Brenda Shefelbine, Travis Armitage, Erin Thompson, Lisa Kleppen, David Donnelly.

Present minutes for approval: Regular Council 10/4/2021 and Special Council 10/13/2021. **Motion by P. Syverson to approve both sets of minutes with 2 small typos that have already been corrected in the minutes in this packet, 2nd T. Wheeler. Discussion: none. Vote: Ayes-6, Nays-0. Motion carried.**

Public Comment: David Donnelly, resident and owner of The Barnyard Tavern, read a statement that on 10/29/21, he delivered a 'notarized' letter to the City, Mayor and Police Chief that he would not allow 'walk through' s' in his establishment by the Police. On 11/5/21, City of Blair Police Officer, Randy Jensen, entering his tavern and told him as an officer of the City he could enter his tavern anytime without the owner's permission and showed him a letter from ATF proving that. The letter said Police can come in to check bottles and bookwork, etc. at reasonable hours but Jensen did not do any of that. Donnelly told Officer Jensen he was not allowing walk through s, but Officer Jensen again entered the Barnyard a second time. Donnelly said he told Jensen he didn't want him there and to leave. Donnelly also said he asked Jensen if his body camera was on and Jensen said yes. Donnelly asked Jensen to state reason why he was in tavern...answer was 'for a walk through'. Donnelly said he asked officer to leave at least 6 times. Donnelly stated the Officer threatened the following: 1) said he would sit in bar all night long and scare customers away, 2) that officer would have the ATF come in and raid his entire building and that this was becoming personal. In closing, Donnelly said after these interactions he doesn't feel safe with this officer and doesn't know who he would call for assistance, since the City only has one officer on duty and also because this officer is a County officer, Donnelly feels the City needs to hear this as it seems to put the City in a huge grey area. Donnelly felt his 4th amendment rights were violated. Council unable to respond as this was not on the agenda for discussion.

Nomination papers for the 2022 Spring Election were distributed to Alderperson's Stephenson, Anderson and Lisowski. Signatures can be obtained starting December 1, 2021.

Discuss/Take Action on Soul Sister's Boutique and several other local businesses, request to bring a 'Holiday Parade Event' to City: Saturday, December 4th @ 6:30 pm. Police department is supportive. Hoping for at least 15-20 parade entries, the Police and Fire departments and Miss Blair float are planning on participating, we are hoping for carolers also. This event will provide an opportunity for local businesses to market themselves and have Open Houses that evening. Route would be determined by Police department and likely short, covering a small part of Broadway and Gilbert Streets. This event will hopefully become an annual event. **The City Council was verbally supportive of the event with the requirement of the group to get a 'Street Closure Permit'.**

CDBG-PF Project Update from Dave Schofield/S.E.H.: The Wisconsin Department of Administration has proposed to make rather significant changes to the 2022 CDBG-PF application requirements. These changes are proposed to include a requirement that applicants have final plans, permits and environmental documents in hand prior to application for CDBG-PF funding. The reason for this, we believe, is a reduction in CDBG-PF funding, coupled with a relatively high rate of turn back (i.e. applicants abandoned funded projects). Through our preliminary work (30% plans have been completed) we believe that it may be possible to complete the final plans, permits and environmental documents prior to May 2022. The Wisconsin Department of Administration has scheduled a conference call for mid-November to discuss the proposed changes. We plan to participate in that conference call and will report the final changes at the City's December City Council Meeting. If all stayed the same with D.O.A. it would be same as last application with \$7,000 total if grant awarded and \$3,500 if grant not

awarded. Question from Stephenson, shouldn't amount be reduced, since most of work is already done from 1st application? Clerk said she would check with S.E.H. on that.

2021 Lighting up the Park Event request: Brenda Shefelbine, organizer for Halloween in the Park event thanked Council for that support, shared it was successful and is growing. Also there was a 'free will collection for dredging of Lake Henry that totaled \$400. She explained, Julie Wheeler had mentioned this and many of those same participants are looking at enhancing the current lighting of trees, etc. in the park to hopefully grow and encompass the entire Park at some point in the future. Businesses, community members have offered donations of lights and sponsorship of a tree, also LaCrosse Rotary Light group has offered to be a resource for ideas. Group is requesting permission from Council to put lights up throughout the park. One problem is that many of the outlets are not working, Brian Jahr, City Park Superintendent said he would work on having outlets repaired. Clerk Frederixon, thanked Trempealeau County Times for the great coverage of the Halloween event. **Motion by D. Stephenson to support this event and have outlets checked out and repaired, 2nd by P. Syverson. Discussion: Anderson commented how nice it looks coming into town to see across the lake. Stephenson also voiced it is a good project, thanked them for spearheading in and the Halloween event. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.**

Fire Department Budget Discussion for new vehicle purchase: Chief Travis Armitage and Brian Jahr explained the department has been planning for a 'Rescue Truck' with high pressure water system, we have never had before, for at least 3 years and discussed with township and city multiple times, most recent Quote is \$191,748, which has increased of course since the initial quote, 1 item had tripled in price due to the shipping issues, etc., most money due at delivery March 2023. This amount is shared with Township @ 52.3 % City and 47.7 % Township. City's portion is approximately \$100,248.20. Options for payment are 100% at time of delivery or pay as items come in, example chaise 1st at \$55,000, and similar with metal, lights, and electronics when they arrive, but quote cannot be guaranteed if we pay in increments. Labor would be at delivery. Current CIP Fire Department balance is \$84,748, with 1 more year to get to the amount needed. \$15,000 was put in that fund for 2022 budget. Alderperson Lisowski had concerns about high cost and if all funds would be available when needed. Armitage said, cost of this vehicle are going up 5% to 8% each year, so longer we wait more we pay, if we had trouble with the amount municipalities can borrow money at 1% or 2%. The high pressure system is made to knock down fires quickly, get to the fire many minutes quicker than the large trucks, because they drive faster on rural roads. Galesville, Whitehall, Osseo & Ettrick have them with high recommendations. This vehicle will allow a crew of only 2 firemen to start fighting fire, when normally processes call for 5. Plans for this type of vehicle to give favorable credit to the City ISO insurance ratings also. The new vehicle will be replacing a 1991 vehicle and that one will go for sale. Syverson liked the idea of a replacement schedule being presented to Council, Armitage agreed. J. Anderson said she understood from the department at the last meeting that the department representative said if there wasn't enough funds in the CIP the Fire Department would fundraise, Armitage said no that would not have been said, they agreed to disagree on that point. General concern from some Council members that if we deplete the CIP for this truck, how will we get to the amount needed for a large truck? Armitage said it is very important to keep your fire department updated, so the residents ISO rating on homeowners insurance is in good shape and if equipment isn't in good shape it is much harder to recruit for the department also. D. Stephenson stated the last time the department was here, no council members spoke against supporting this purchase and now 2 months later our costs have increased 5% to 7%. After much discussion, **Motion by D. Stephenson to authorize & make purchase of new Rescue Truck vehicle @ quoted price of \$191,748, which is split between Township and City, with City's portion approximately \$100,250 (out of Fire Department CIP fund) as described by Fire Department representatives and due March of 2023, 2nd by C. Ekern. Discussion: Lisowski voiced concern about the extravagance of this type of vehicle. Armitage commented that he understands that thinking, but if you walk through our building and see the newest large truck we have it**

is very nice, works well for us, but is less than half the price of one Whitehall just purchased, the cost is unbelievable, but Blair/Preston Department is trying hard to find a balance between staying safe & up to codes while keeping the cost to City/Township at a minimum. Roll Call Vote: D. Stephenson/yes, C. Ekern/yes, P. Syverson/yes, J. Anderson/yes, M. Lisowski/No, T. Wheeler/yes. Motion approved 5 Yes, 1 No.

Motion by J. Anderson to move Agenda item # 16 Server License Application up to this point in the meeting, so people in attendance don't have to wait; 2nd by P. Syverson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.

Server License Applications: After Police Chief completed Background Checks for: Erin Thompson/ there ARE potential indicators for denial of license, Bryan Kampa/There ARE potential indicators for denial of license, Aloura Byrd/ There are NO indicators for denial of license. Erin Thompson attended. After discussion between Attorney Radcliffe and City Council/Mayor, **Motion by M. Lisowski to approve all 3 license applications as presented, 2nd by P. Syverson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.**

Mayor Rawson opened 2022 Budget Hearing for public comment, called 3 times for public comment, hearing none, decided to leave the Public Hearing open until Budget discussion was completed.

Tax, Finance & Personnel Committee Chairperson, Jill Anderson went through the following 2022 Budget work done by the Committee over 3 meetings: 2022 Budget Publication was distributed, which shows General Fund Revenues/Expenditures and Capital Project Fund Revenues/Expenditures. Some of the things the committee had to consider for 2022 budget, our estimated revenues increase almost \$38,000 for 2022. Our 2022 Township/City % of financial commitment for shared items is 52.3 % City and 47.7 % Township. Health Insurance rates increased 10.5 %; after much consideration and comparison to neighboring Cities the Committee is recommending a 5% wage increase across the board for all full time employees, except Andy Graff newly hired who will receive a 50 cent increase after a successful 6 month probationary period; part time employees to receive a 3 % increase; This proposed 2022 budget does include the City portion of the \$5,000 increase requested by the Fire Department. The Budget publication spreadsheet shows the Committee was able to balance our 2022 budget with \$161,169.00 remaining for the Capital Project Fund, 2021 amount for CIP was \$116, 638. Capital Project Fund dollars were distributed as follows: Law Enforcement/\$9,000(same as 2021): Fire Protection/\$15,000(same as 2021); Highway Equipment/\$40,000(same as 2021); Highway & Street/\$50,000(0 in 2021); Lake Outlay/\$0(\$30,000 in 2021, City has met their obligation for Lake improvement) and Contingency/\$17,569(\$12,638 in 2021). Total Local Tax Levy went down by -0.47%. Unable to raise budget much as our net new construction went up less than 1%.

Committee is also recommending that our Police Chief, City Clerk/Deputy Treasurer and Treasurer/Deputy Clerk positions change to 'salary'. Based on working a minimum 40 hour work week. Chairperson Anderson said "If things are NOT done with in the 40 hours, it is on the employee's dime." With the exception of the Clerk or Treasurer being paid \$250 per regular Council meeting attendance, Cleanup Day events and election events; \$30 for attending Committee meetings if requested by the Chairperson. Chairperson Anderson asked for questions...Travis Armitage asked what all falls under the 'public safety' portion of the budget, Anderson explained, Law enforcement, Fire protection, Fire, Flood issues and Dam. **Motion by J. Anderson to close the 2022 Budget Public Hearing, 2nd by C. Ekern. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.**

Motion by C. Ekern to approve the 2022 budget as presented and per the Budget Publication Spreadsheet, 2nd by M. Lisowski. Discussion: None. Roll Call Vote: D. Stephenson/yes, C. Ekern/yes, P. Syverson/yes, J. Anderson/Yes, M. Lisowski/yes, T. Wheeler/yes. Motion approved.

Committee Reports: Tax, Finance & Personnel Committee meetings on 10/6, 10/11 & 10/12/2021. Police Ordinance Committee Meeting 10/12 & 11/4/2021. Park Committee Meeting 10/13/2021. All minutes were distributed to Council prior to this meeting. **Motion by J. Anderson to accept minutes as presented and place on file, 2nd C. Ekern. Discussion: none. Yes-6, No-0. Motion carried.**

Discuss/Take Action on Park Commission recommendation to: Reimburse Nate Dahl for expenses incurred related to Recreation Program Flag Football, amount of \$300 total, so \$150 from City and \$150 from Taylor. **Motion by C. Ekern to approve City portion of \$150 to Nate Dahl as presented, 2nd by T. Wheeler. Discussion: M. Lisowski questioned if this was open for all local kids, Anderson said because of the short time frame she believes Nate and assistant put together a team of their selecting, Anderson feels like in 2022 when the Program director has more time it will be all inclusive to area youth. Roll Call Vote: D. Stephenson/Yes, C. Ekern/Yes, P. Syverson/Yes, J. Anderson/Yes, M. Lisowski/Yes, T. Wheeler/Yes. Motion approved.**

Summer Recreation Program Director, Lauren Kidd has agreed to forfeit the \$1,000 portion of her 2021 salary for the flag football program as she did not work on that at all. **Motion by C. Ekern to approve 0 payment to Lauren Kidd for flag football 2021, 2nd by D. Stephenson. Discussion: None. Roll Call Vote: D. Stephenson/Yes, C. Ekern/Yes, P. Syverson/Yes, J. Anderson/Yes, M. Lisowski/Yes, T. Wheeler/Yes. Motion approved.**

Discussion/Take Action on Resolution # 11-08-2021 Authorizing submittal of WEDC/CDI grant application for Blair Haus Sports Bar & Grill, LLC. Attorney Radcliffe has been included in the development of this Resolution. **Motion by M. Lisowski to approve the resolution # 11-08-2021 as presented and with resolution dates changed form # 12-06-2021 to # 11-08-2021 , 2nd by P. Syverson. Discussion: None. Vote: Yes 6, No 0. Motion approved.**

Building permits approved by G.E.C. for 2021 spreadsheet was distributed to Council and Mayor. Request from Clerk for Ordinance Committee to look at Solar Ordinance so we can be updated to current requirements and residents considering solar have the process possibly streamlined and accurate to current practices. Attorney said it would be the Ordinance Committee to meet and consider the Solar Ordinance.

Present Vouchers for review and approval: **Motion by J. Anderson to approve the vouchers as presented in packets, 2nd by P. Syverson. Discussion: C. Ekern asked about the \$3,829.50 bill for the 'Large shelter', door replacement, seems high, Brian Jahr said it was for 5 doors. Roll call vote: D. Stephenson-yes, C. Ekern-yes, P. Syverson-yes, J. Anderson-yes, M. Lisowski-yes, T. Wheeler-yes. Motion carried.**

Clerk Report: We have been getting information from Trempealeau County Treasurer related to preparations for tax bill season, expecting the bills in early December. December 21, 2021 Final date by WI Statute that tax bills can be mailed out. Office have been receiving quite a few compliments on the good job being done by Officer Kokott and Officer Potts. Welcome/new City Street Superintendent Mr. Andy Graff, this week was Andy's first week. He has impressed both Debi and I as far as his interest in organizing things so he has a good inventory of Street related equipment and things like signs. He has talked with the loader company to set up training and is working closely with Bob Fraust to learn water testing requirements, which was very similar to the previous experience he brought with him. Brian Jahr and he are also working primarily on preparations for winter snow fall, supplementing our salt/sand stockpile, sander in dually, checking and replacing plow blades. Andy seems to like to have things organized and work to be prepared. I think he showed good work ethic his first week, hoping he comes back for a 2nd. ☺ It was a busy week for him. Next to Heidi's Hair Care sounds like a photography studio is working at being a new City business, I asked Heidi to have them contact the City.

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Next Council meeting is December 6, 2021 @ 6:30 pm.

Motion by C. Ekern to adjourn meeting at 8:00 pm, 2nd M. Lisowski. Discussion: None. Vote: Ayes-6, Nays-0. Motion approved @ 8:00 pm

Susan Frederixon, City Clerk/Deputy Treasurer