

PROCEEDINGS
OF
CITY COUNCIL
OF THE
CITY OF LOWELL

For the Regular Meeting of November 7, 2011.

The Meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Hodges and City Clerk Betty Morlock called the roll.

Present: Councilmembers Jeff Altoft, Maryalene LaPonsie, Andrew Schrauben, Mayor Pro Tem Sharon Ellison and Mayor Jim Hodges.

Absent: None.

Also Present: City Manager Mark Howe, City Clerk Betty Morlock, Police Chief Barry Getzen, Lowell Light and Power General Manager Greg Pierce and Lowell Light and Power Boardmember and Planning Commission Chair Jim Hall.

Item #1. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA.**

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLISON and supported by LAPONSIE to approve the agenda as written.

YEA: 5. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 0. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #2. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF OCTOBER 17, 2011.**

IT WAS MOVED BY SCHRAUBEN and supported by LAPONSIE to approve the regular meeting minutes of October 17, 2011 as written.

YEA: 5. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 0. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #3. **APPROVAL OF THE ACCOUNTS PAYABLES.**

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLISON and supported by LAPONSIE that the bills and accounts payables be allowed and the warrants issued.

YEA: Councilmembers Altoft, LaPonsie, Schrauben, Mayor Pro Tem Ellison and Mayor Hodges.

NAY: NONE. ABSENT: NONE. MOTION CARRIED.

BILLS AND ACCOUNTS PAYABLE (11/07/11)
GENERAL FUND \$33,696.93
MAJOR STREET FUND 13,719.25
LOCAL STREET FUND 5,504.73
HISTORICAL DISTRICT 412.05
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT FUND 14,061.16

AIRPORT FUND	769.92
WASTEWATER FUND	43,770.40
WATER FUND	7,795.40
DATA PROCESSING FUND	4,542.03
EQUIPMENT FUND	328.53
CURRENT TAX FUND	25,343.35
TRAILWAY	105,733.93

Item #4. **CITIZEN COMMENTS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA.** No comments were received.

Item #5. **PENDING COUNCIL PROJECTS UPDATE.** City Manager Mark Howe commented on the following regarding pending council projects.

- Streets, Sidewalks Plan – We have completed our survey of city sidewalks and estimate that it will cost approximately \$165,000 to execute sidewalk repairs throughout the city. This includes about 4,000 lineal feet of 4-inch sidewalk and 1,400 lineal feet of 6 inch sidewalk. The cost per homeowner/lot could be from \$100 to \$1,500. The next step is to start working on a funding model that will provide assistance in covering this expense.

Councilmember Altoft questioned the policy of sidewalk repair. Is the sidewalk inspected and is a permit necessary due to work being done in the right of way? Mayor Hodges did not believe they needed to be inspected nor was a permit required. Howe stated he would check into the issue.

- Wastewater Treatment Update – We have performed smoke testing on the N.W. side of the City to look for potential sources of clean water discharge to the system. None were located. We also dye tested two commercial buildings and found that the roof downspouts from one building were discharging into the sanitary sewer. A letter was sent to the owner outlining the necessary repairs that need to take place. These changes to their downspouts will eliminate 3,427 gallons of rain water for every 1” of rain. Our next step is to meet with Dennis Benoit of Hubbell, Roth and Clerk to discuss options moving forward. In addition, and concurrently, we are examining manhole covers throughout the city where we believe some rain water may be entering the sanitary system. We will share these results and our meeting with Benoit at a future council meeting.

Item #6. **FILING OF REVISED ELECTRICAL RATES.** City Manager Mark Howe explained the Board of Lowell Light and Power approved rate increases during its September 13, 2011 meeting. Under Section 16.6 of the City Charter, the Board has full power and authority to fix all rates for electricity. The adjusted rates are required to be filed with the City Clerk.

Mayor Hodges was comfortable with the increase. There has been much discussion.

No further comments were provided.

Item #12. **COUNCIL REPORTS AND COMMENTS.** Councilmember Schrauben stated the Airport Board met last week. Progress is being made on the tree trimming and all the hangars are full.

The next Parks and Recreation Commission meeting will be held in December. The LARA meeting will be held next week.

Councilmember LaPonsie stated the site plan for the bio digester was reviewed with some conditions such as can Smith Street handle the truck traffic. Also, the ordinance states there should be a solid fence place around the facility.

Councilmember Altoft stated the dog park recently had sand delivered. He also noted the election on November 8, 2011 and encouraged everyone to vote.

Mayor Pro Tem Ellison had no meetings to attend. She encouraged everyone to vote on November 8, 2011.

Mayor Hodges stated he and City Manager Mark Howe attended the Chili Cook Off at Impact Church. Hodges received a thank you note from Representative Justin Amish regarding the town hall meeting in the council chambers on October 17, 2011. On November 10, 2011 Hodges and City Manager Mark Howe will attend an event at the BOB in Grand Rapids, hosted by Gilda's Club. A major announcement will be made. Hodges also noted the Lowell Light and Power Board met. Work is being done regarding the bio digester. Discussion was also held regarding rate increases. Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors will meet November 8, 2011. Girls Night Out went very well in October. Christmas through Lowell is coming up as well as the Christmas Parade. Coffee with Council was held on November 5, 2011. Two new people moving into the community met with the Council. Hodges encouraged everyone to get out and vote on November 8, 2011.

Item #13. **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**. City Manager Howe commented on the following:

- Howe served as a judge for the Larkins Chili Cook Off, Attwood Chili Cookoff and Impact Church. He tasted many great recipes.
- There continues to be discussion relating to the elimination of the personal property tax. This could result in the loss of about \$100,000 for the City of Lowell. Please encourage our elected representatives to support replacement revenue if the personal property tax is eliminated. There has been discussion about phasing the elimination over a period of time. Also, some discussion was held regarding replacement of some of the revenue.
- The Governor recently announced plans to make changes to gas taxes and Act 51 distribution to cities, villages and road commissions. The plan will eliminate Act 51 funding for agencies currently receiving less than \$50,000. We currently receive about \$245,000 in Act 51 funding.
- The City is working on a proposal for a cost allocation plan and an analysis of the cost of city services. The cost allocation plan determines the cost of central services or the administrative cost. For example, how much of his time and others is spread between the different funds. He has a hard time delivering an explanation of how things are spread between the departments. He has come to the conclusion it may be more beneficial to have an outside individual help work through such issues. Other issues where assistance could be provided involve the Equipment Fund and Data Processing Fund and how these costs could be distributed.
- The second piece is a city services analysis. The company would take the actual cost plus the administrative cost of providing a certain service for the City. This would be broken down by department and services within each of the departments. Howe believed the information would be very beneficial as we begin to think about next year's budget.

Councilmember LaPonsie questioned the cost of the service. Howe estimated the cost of the allocation plan at approximately \$5,000 and the city services analysis between \$15,000 to \$20,000. LaPonsie was not opposed to the concept but felt it was a lot of money right now.

Councilmember Schrauben questioned if there was a way to measure the efficiencies that the entire process would provide. How would this help generate a long term savings? Howe stated fees could be increased for certain services, which would ultimately pay for the cost of the study itself.

Mayor Pro Tem Ellison was concerned with the cost as well as the timing. She questioned when Howe wanted to do this. Howe estimated by February or March. If something can be completed in April then budget adjustments can still be made for the current year based upon the plan. This would also provide information needed for next year's budget. Ellison wanted to find out the cost and how it would be paid for first. She believed \$5000 for the cost of allocation would be more affordable and the other would be more of a wish list. Howe noted we have to find a way to balance the budget. He questioned if it made sense to spend money for something that may help us to balance the budget.

- Howe walked the Moose/Rogers property with representatives from the North Country Trail Association. They are interested in building and maintaining a hiking trail through this property. The property is divided in two. The first is the western part with the Flat River on the west side and then the railroad tracks on the east. The other begins from the railroad tracks and goes all the way over to Jackson Street. The North Country Trail is interested in using a portion of the property. They are interested in helping and building the trail and also maintaining it. They would also assist with a couple connectors. Howe may try to finalize a plan and then have discussion with the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- Howe has been working with City leadership regarding the website. Any input would be appreciated. The idea is to make it easier for people to navigate through the site.
- Howe noted he will be attending asset management training. Asset management is a method by which you go about assessing your streets as assets. They teach you how to prioritize.
- The biodigester project is moving forward. The lease for the property needs to be approved by Council as well as the purchase of the facility after a five year period. Howe suggested a public informational meeting be held.

Item #14. **APPOINTMENTS**. No appointments at this time.

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLISON to adjourn at 8:22 p.m.

DATE:

APPROVED:

James W. Hodges, Mayor

Betty R. Morlock, City Clerk