

PROCEEDINGS
OF
CITY COUNCIL
OF THE
CITY OF LOWELL

For the Regular Meeting of Monday, November 21, 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, Mayor Pro Tem Sharon Ellison and Mayor Jim Hodges.

Absent: Councilmember Andrew Schrauben.

Also Present: City Manager Mark Howe, City Clerk Betty Morlock, Chief of Police Barry Getzen and Light and Power Boardmember and Planning Commissioner Chair Jim Hall.

IT WAS MOVED BY LAPONISE and seconded by ELLISON to excuse the absence of Councilmember Schrauben.

YEA: 4. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

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

IT WAS MOVED ELLISON and seconded by ALTOFT to approve the agenda as written.

YEA: 4. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #2. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 7, 2011.**

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLISON and seconded by ALTOFT to approve the regular meeting minutes of the November 7, 2011 as written.

YEA: 4. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Ellison questioned if the \$7,000 for salt is for the entire winter season and noted the final payment for the BS&A Software. City Manager Howe said he would check with DPW Director Dan Desjarden regarding the salt.

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

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

NAY: NONE. ABSENT: Councilmember Schrauben. MOTION CARRIED.

<u>BILLS AND ACCOUNTS PAYABLE (11/07/11)</u>	
GENERAL FUND	\$55,113.66
MAJOR STREET FUND	3,869.16
LOCAL STREET FUND	15,107.82
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT FUND	154,957.73
AIRPORT FUND	355.34
WASTEWATER FUND	5,728.57
WATER FUND	119,790.68
DATA PROCESSING FUND	19,271.29
EQUIPMENT FUND	1,189.42
CURRENT TAX FUND	11,351.66

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

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

- Streets, Sidewalks Plan – At the last meeting Councilmember Altoft questioned if a sidewalk permit is necessary for work done in the City right of way. In the Code of Ordinances, a permit is not necessary but an inspection by the Department of Public Works is necessary.
- East Riverbank Renovations - We received the final staff ranking from the Department of Natural Resources with an improved score of 370 (up 40 points). We are the 23rd ranked project out of 100. We are at the \$5,066,800 cut-off which is well within the anticipated fundable range. Nothing will be final until the Natural Resources Commission makes a final recommendation and the Legislature approves the projects, but things continue to look very favorable.

Item #6. **ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS.** Mayor Hodges noted his wife is employed with King Milling. Therefore, he would be abstaining from discussion and turned the meeting over to ZBA Chair LaPonsie.

A. 139 S. Broadway Street - King Milling Company - variances related to new buildings- public hearing on December 19, 2011. City Manager Howe noted past practice had been for the ZBA to set the public hearing, which is not necessarily a requirement in statute or in the zoning ordinance. In order to expedite the process in the future for establishing public hearings, he recommends the ZBA adopt a motion stating that the City Manager or his/her designee may set dates and times for public hearings in accordance with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act and the City of Lowell Zoning Ordinance.

IT WAS MOVED BY ALTOFT and seconded by ELLISON to allow the City Manager or his/her designee to set dates and times for public hearings in accordance with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act and the City of Lowell Zoning Ordinance.

YEA: Councilmembers Altoft, LaPonsie and Mayor Pro Tem Ellison. NAY: None.

ABSTAIN: 1. (Hodges) ABSENT: 1. (Schrauben) MOTION CARRIED.

Item #7. **APPROVAL OF THE 2012 CITY COUNCIL MEETING DATES.**

IT WAS MOVED BY LAPONSIE and seconded by ALTOFT to adopt the 2012 City Council meeting dates as presented.

YEA: 4. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #8. **MONTHLY REPORTS.** Mayor Pro Tem Ellison commented how nice it was to see the before and after pictures for the painting project in the Grit Room/Entrance Channel at the Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Item #9. **COUNCIL REPORTS AND COMMENTS.** Councilmember LaPonsie had no reports on her committees. She did note the Citizens of Lowell did not re-elect her. However, she thanked the 133 votes she did receive from residents of Lowell.

Councilmember Altoft stated how successful Christmas through Lowell was. He also thanked the residents who voted for him. Altoft noted the Christmas Parade is on Saturday, December 3rd at 6 p.m.

Councilmember Ellison stated Christmas through Lowell went very well. Ellison thanked the citizens for voting for her in the recent election. It is bittersweet that Councilmembers LaPonsie and Altoft were not re-elected. Each has done a good job and it was a pleasure working together. But Ellison also looked forward to welcoming the new councilmembers.

Tickets for the Lowell High School football game will be sold at the high school.

Ellison noted her meeting with City Manager Howe. One of the discussions involved the water rates and why are they so much higher than other communities. Howe stated he has spent much time comparing the rates with other municipalities. One cannot always make a wise comparison because there are many issues that stand behind the rate. Much of the amount relates to the debt service on projects that need to be done TO improve the water system and any future planning for improvements to the system. A municipality could have a lower rate but this could also mean they are making no plans for future improvements. Another issue relates to the system being subsidized by other users. Howe would never compare the City's rates to the City of Ionia because they have a rate structure for facilities using over a million gallons of water per year. The State pays a large share of the water bill for Ionia County Prison. Therefore, the City of Ionia is able to keep their rates lower because of having such a large customer.

Ellison wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Mayor Hodges stated Lowell Light and Power met last week and was unable to attend. Howe stated a public information meeting will be held November 30, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. for discussion of the proposed bio-digester. He hoped this is the beginning of more public meetings regarding issues or projects of this size.

Hodges stated the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors met. Police Chief Getzen attended. It was a spirited meeting and much was accomplished. The Chamber of Commerce wrapped up its portion of the Christmas through Lowell. Again, it was great to see all the people in community.

Hodges encouraged everyone to support the local businesses on Small Business Saturday, November 26, 2011.

The Look Memorial Fund will meet next week.

Item #10. **MANAGERS REPORT**

1. Howe met with representatives from Kent County Community Development to discuss potential projects for 2012. We will begin to narrow down our priority projects and report back at a future council meeting.
2. The auditors have completed most of their field work and will present a draft report to management by the end of the month.
3. We are making great progress toward developing a street improvement plan for the City. We hope to have staff from the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council assess pavement conditions on all local streets yet this fall. Once that is completed, we can evaluate the appropriate mix of fixes that will extend the useful life of each street then work to develop priorities and a long-term funding plan.
4. We have been working with the Michigan Rural Water Association to analyze our current and future rates for water and sewer systems to ensure that rates are covering the short and long term costs of operating the systems. We have saved more than \$10,000 by working with the association and doing this work in house as opposed to hiring a consultant.
5. City offices will be closed on Thursday and Friday in observance of the Thanksgiving Holiday.

Item #11. **APPOINTMENTS**. No appointments at this time.

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLISON to adjourn at 7:57 p.m.

DATE:

APPROVED:

James W. Hodges, Mayor

Betty R. Morlock, City Clerk