

CITY OF ROCK FALLS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Monday, November 26, 2012 – 6:30pm
Minutes

Those present at the meeting were as follows: Mayor David Blanton, Aldermen Brian Snow, Lee Folsom, Daehle Reitzel, Dave Hand, Jim Schuneman, John Watts, Robbin Blackert – City Administrator and Sylvia Frey.

Aldermen Absent: Aldermen Glen Kuhlemier and Mark Vandersnick

Department Heads Present: Dick Simon (Electric)

Mayor Blanton asked Alderman Schuneman to present for discussion the Illinois Municipal League. Alderman Schuneman enjoyed attending this year's IML conference. He attended the following meetings and discussion was held accordingly:

Efficient Municipal Advocacy (Legislative Process). Attendees were given information on how to communicate with local and state elected officials on various issues our city faces from time to time. Alderman Schuneman mentioned this was helpful information which he could use in the future.

Porous Materials for Roads/Parking Areas. Attendees were given information on equipment which installs porous material layer lining over gravel/blacktop to reinforce condition of roads and parking areas. Everyone was impressed with this presentation.

Pension Program. Attendees were given information on various options for investing and funding Police and Fire pensions for which municipalities' contributions are required by law. At this time, Robbin mentioned the city is meeting the Truth in Taxation required level of 5%. Mayor mentioned cities are required to cover pensions/insurance costs for all family members of police officers throughout their lifetime. He stated state pension IMRF funding isn't included in the Police Fire Pension Program.

Alderman Hand stated he also felt the meetings were helpful. He compared Rock Falls with other cities at this conference and felt our city expressed more cooperation and teamwork than other cities during the various meetings.

Alderman Reitzel felt certain meetings were informational while he was disappointed in other meetings where no answers were given to questions directed at the speakers. He stated this conference didn't designate specific topics between Home Rule and Non-Home Rule municipalities.

Alderman Watts stated he attended meetings on Retail Development, FOIA and Effective Communications. Being a newly elected official he felt these meetings were informative and beneficial. One suggestion he had was for the city to consider working with social media as a resource to connect with our community. He mentioned using Facebook and Twitter as additional resources besides Channel 5 to alert residents of boil orders and such. He stated not all residents utilize Comcast, local newspaper or local radio stations; whereas, majority of residents would have access to internet and cellphones.

After a brief discussion among the members on this issue, the Mayor decided to set up an 'ad hoc' committee appointing Alderman Watts as chairman, with members - Alderman Schuneman and Alderman Snow to begin this process with Robbin Blackert. He will make this appointment at next month's council meeting.

Alderman Watts mentioned his concerns about economic development in our community and Robbin suggested he contact Sandy Henrekin at the RFCDC with his questions to better understand this aspect of our city.

Mayor stated that all council members are encouraged to attend all scheduled committee meetings and administrative hearings (held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month) to stay informed of various city issues.

Members discussed the possibility of future development at the Whiteside County Airport in respect to local factories utilizing the airport for transports. Mayor and Robbin will both work on researching for funding through grants and conducting discussions with airport board and Sterling officials on this.

Robbin Blackert asked council members for their direction in tackling issues coming from the IML Conference as she's interested in working on them in the near future.

Mayor Blanton presented discussion on Hennepin Canal Parkway and how the city was beginning to work with IDNR (IL Dept of Natural Resources) and other advocate groups to maintain and clean up the 2-mile stretch of the canal located just north of Interstate 88. Mayor and Alderman Schuneman attended a meeting today with IDNR and Tourism to discuss future plans for the canal in Rock Falls. Each member was given a spreadsheet showing expectations of IDNR compared to City of Rock Falls for their review.

Alderman Schuneman presented a slideshow of the canal area near Colona IL which has been cleaned up and maintained. He showed another slideshow of the city's canal area and the current overgrown condition of dead trees, soil erosion, weeds and such. Members discussed options the city would have to clean up and maintain this area; whereas, lack of city funds was main obstacle.

Mayor mentioned the fact that if the city wants to work on maintaining the 2-mile stretch of canal then an annexation of this area to the city and a lease agreement with IDNR would have to be approved. He stated IDNR doesn't have the manpower/funds to maintain this area at this time.

Once annexation has been approved and lease agreement has been signed with IDNR, Mayor stated grants are available for various groups to help with funding of clean up and maintenance for the future. Also, members felt that Alderman Schuneman should be the city's chairperson for 'ad hoc' canal committee to work with IL DNR towards annexation/lease finalization. He will make this appointment at next month's council meeting.

Robbin Blackert wanted the members to be aware this annexation would be considered contiguous with Shore Acres residential properties for future annexation purposes.

With no further business, meeting was adjourned at 8:30p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor David H. Blanton