

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN  
OF THE CITY OF ROCK FALLS

April 20, 2021

The regular meeting of the Mayor and City Council of Rock Falls, Illinois was called to order at 6:30 p.m. April 20, 2021 in the Council Chambers by Mayor William B. Wescott.

Deputy City Clerk Michelle Conklin called the roll following the pledge of allegiance. A quorum was present including Mayor Wescott, Aldermen Palmer, Wangelin, Snow, Babel, Schuneman, Kleckler, Doane and Sobottka. In addition, Attorney Matt Cole, Attorney James Reese and City Administrator Robbin Blackert were present.

A motion was made by Alderman Snow and second by Alderman Sobottka to approve the Mayoral Appointment of Pam Martinez to the position of City Clerk to fill the remaining 2 week term.

**Vote 8 aye, motion carried.**

Cynthia Mammosser from Riverside Mobile Estates addressed the City Council with concerns that the residents of the park have with Mr. DeHaan.

Consent Agenda items 1 and 2 were read aloud by Deputy City Clerk Michelle Conklin.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the April 6, 2021 City Council Meeting
2. Approval of bills as presented

A motion was made by Alderman Snow and second by Alderman Wangelin to approve Consent Agenda items 1 and 2.

**Vote 8 aye, motion carried.**

A motion was made by Alderman Snow and second by Alderman Sobottka to approve Ordinance 2021-2521 - Amending Chapter 20, Section 20-42 Relating to Recovery of Costs for Weed Removal.

**Vote 8 aye, motion carried.**

A motion was made by Alderman Palmer and second by Alderman Babel to approve Ordinance 2021-2522 - Amending Section 32-348 (a) Purchase Power Adjustment Factor.

**Vote 8 aye, motion carried.**

A motion was made by Alderman Snow and second by Alderman Palmer to approve Ordinance 2021-2523 - Supplemental Appropriation Ordinance (Fiscal Year 2021).

**Vote 8 aye, motion carried.**

A motion was made by Alderman Sobottka and second by Alderman Palmer to amend Ordinance 2021-2524 - Ordinance Amending Chapter 20, Section 20-48 Relating to Prairie Grass Plots Within the City Limits by the removal of Milkweed as a noxious weed in Section 20-48(b) Definitions.

**Vote 8 aye, motion carried.**

A motion was made by Alderman Sobottka and second by Alderman Palmer to approve Ordinance 2021-2524 - Ordinance Amending Chapter 20, Section 20-48 Relating to Prairie Grass Plots Within the City Limits as amended.

**Vote 8 aye, motion carried.**

A motion was made by Alderman Babel and second by Alderman Snow to approve Ordinance 2021-2525 – Amending Chapter 32, Article V of the Rock Falls Municipal Code to Forego the Annual Increase to Monthly Electrical Charges for the 2022 Fiscal Year.

**Vote 8 aye, motion carried.**

Administrator Blackert thanked Dick Simon, Electric Department Director for his hard work on not increasing the electric rates for Fiscal Year 2022.

Administrator Blackert thanked Alderman Jim Schuneman for help and work that was done establishing the governance of the Utility committee and all the time and effort that he put into educating himself on the utilities. When the Mayor brought Tourism back into the City he worked very hard at getting that established.

Alderman Snow stated that the May Building Code Committee will be held on May 12, 2021 instead of May 5, 2021.


A motion was made by Alderman Kleckler and second by Alderman Snow to accept the recommendation from Willett, Hofmann & Associates to approve all the unit price proposals from all the vendors for the 2021 Motor Fuel Tax General Maintenance as presented.

**Vote 8 aye, motion carried.**

Alderman Schuneman addressed the City Council (See attached).

A motion was made by Alderman Schuneman and second by Alderman Sobottka to Adjourn.

**Viva Voce Vote, motion carried. (7:26 p.m.)**

  
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Michelle K. Conklin, Deputy City Clerk

- 12 years ago my first vote on this council was to spend 30 million dollars on a new wastewater treatment plant. Of course that didn't JUST appear on the council's agenda. It took a decade of preparation and negotiation by previous councils and administrations. That preparation allowed us to be in a position to take advantage of available financing. That financing offered us significant savings which was passed through to our citizens. Since completion of the plant, we have taken steps to upgrade the rest of the system starting with our main lift station on 12<sup>th</sup> avenue. We contracted with a firm named Red Zone. Red Zone has deployed cameras throughout our entire system to analyze the condition of the pipes . That data will be cataloged and saved. This information will be an invaluable tool for long term planning . It has already been utilized for recent repairs. As we identify and index trouble areas, we are already slip lining older lines and manholes.

- We also faced a challenged with what to do with a burned out abandoned factory. This was another process that spanned two administrations and various councils. With, what I consider lightning speed, we were able to take down 30 buildings, remove the contamination, replace an abandoned street, and create a beautiful green space with an amphitheater. The green space is now full of art, music and community events. A first class hotel has been built. There is also a new Banquet facility that seats up to 600 people. Further plans in the pipeline include another hotel, public restrooms, a water feature and skate park. The old limestone building, another abandoned riverfront property, was recently been taken down. That property is currently being prepared for development. We are also making progress on the demolition of the Micro buildings. If you are an optimist, the shameful eyesore that sits on the southeast corner of first avenue and second street will be renovated before you are forced to condemn it and tear it down.

- We have become Nationally recognized for our work with the Brownsfield program and are also recognized Nationally by the APPA with multiple RP3 awards.

- In our electric department, we have instituted a preventive maintenance program for the hydro plant. This was something that previous administrations had neglected. Since the installation of the new program, the result has been a doubling of the output at the hydro plant. Another appropriate upgrade would be to name the building in honor of Glenn Kuhlemeir. We recently completed a major upgrade to our Avenue A sub station and entered into a partnership with IMEA to create a solar garden. That project is located in our Industrial park on land we could not even give away. We even have the ability to generate our own electricity, which puts our City in a unique position. As you know, the State of Texas recently experienced major outages due to ice storms. They were without adequate backup generation and their citizens spent days without power. Should we experience a major weather event and lose our primary supply, small as we are, we have the ability to keep the entire city operating with our own backup generation. We are also investing in an Advanced Metering Infrastructure. Currently, we are installing smart electric meters. Following that will be smart water meters. This will upgrade our ability to operate efficiently. The data collected from these meters will also give our residents and businesses information they can use to save on their electric and water costs.

- With regard to our water, we are currently pursuing funding options that will deliver major improvements to that system. We are also ahead of the curve with lead abatement.

EXPLICIT

- According to the State, the first priority for economic development is fast, reliable internet access. (code word fiber) Comcast service has become unreliable, distant and expensive. We recognized a need to develop our own fiber system. After the initial groundwork, we partnered with Surf Broadband to bring fast, reliable and quality internet service to every school, business and home in Rock Falls. The fiber roll out is ongoing. It is on track to be completed within the next year.

- These achievements only touch on what has been accomplished in the last twelve years.

- Going forward let me identify two areas that you will need to pay special attention.

First is our Police and Fire pension obligations.

We are often faced with unfunded mandates from the state. One of the most recent is the unfunded mandate regarding police reforms. After 40 years of bullying, Speaker Madigan is gone and the first piece of legislation from the new speaker's office is a politically motivated bill without any funding. Some things never change. None the less, these pension obligations are unfunded mandates on steroids. Not only does the State fail to live up to it's obligation, it mandates changes to the rules in midstream. Those most recent changes have moved us from funding levels of 90+% to 65% with the stroke of a pen. Chicago, of course gets treated differently and the only choice we are left with is to raise taxes on our citizens, Perhaps the Federal bailout will make a difference.... that was a joke

The second area is management of our storm water. We live on flat sandy ground. We have a high water table and sit on top of an aquifer. All of this makes it difficult to dispose of our storm water. Basement sump pumps, along with infiltration, play a part in flooding our wastewater system. Prior administrations failed to provide a retention pond for development of the Benchmark sub division. That has become a major problem for the people living in that area. Going forward, it is imperative to include storm water management in any future development. We have built a retention pond to service our Clearwater Industrial Park. That was done as soon as development began. You must be vigilant in dealing with future developers regarding storm water retention as we develop Glen's Garden and the Schmitt property.

Before I conclude, I would like to recognize and applaud our Department Heads for their dedication to this city. Ms Blackert, Police Chiefs Keulper, Nelson and Pilgrim, Fire Chiefs Larson and Cook, Mr Simon, Ms Hatfield, Mr Cox, Mr Padilla, Mr Spinka, Ms Jones, Mr Searing, Ms Conklin, and Mr Shaffer. Our Police and Fire fighters, and all of the rest of our employees. I would also like to thank Mr Reese for his years of sage counsel.

Finally .... We live in one of the greenest cities in Illinois. We have a state of the art wastewater treatment facility, a fully functioning hydro plant, and a solar garden. We are developing our riverfront and have cultivated several prairie plots. Together with the University of Illinois, we created the first Storybook Trail in Illinois. We also partnered with our citizens to prepare other trails for development. As a gigabit city, we are poised for the future. We can take pride in these achievements. We serve the public good and must always act in their best interests. They deserve the best we have to give. They take pride in their community. They volunteer for public events and support our local businesses. Unfounded claims and reckless misinformation do damage to our citizens, our employees and our city. Take your charge seriously and our community will be well served. I am proud to have played a small part in what has been accomplished here over the last twelve years. It is my hope that 12 years from now, you can also look back and cite similar achievements.