

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

OF THE LA SALLE CITY COUNCIL

December 11, 2023

A regular meeting of the La Salle City Council of La Salle, Illinois was held, Monday, December 11, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. with Mayor Jeff Grove presiding with proper notices being duly and continuously posted.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Grove asked for a moment of silence for Denise Siebata. Mayor believed her to be about 98 years old. She loved LaSalle and always was volunteering, between Carus Mansion tours or downtown functions. He asked for all to keep her in their thoughts tonight.

ROLL CALL

Present - Mayor Grove, Aldermen Bacidore, Ptak, Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson, Herndon, Crane

Absent – Alderman Herndon

A quorum was present.

Others Present: Deputy Clerk Brent Bader, Finance Director John Duncan, City Attorney Jim McPhedran, Econ. Dev. Director Curt Bedei, City Engineer Brian Brown, Police Chief Mike Smudzinski, Supt. Of Public Works Kevin Fay, Building Inspector Andy Bacidore, Fire Chief Jerry Janick

COMMENTS

Jamie Hicks, 4th Ward, asked Finance Director Duncan what the city has come up with water rates for Carus. Duncan responded by saying that nothing has been finalized. The city has met with them at the water treatment plant and has presented them with a couple option to consider.

Hicks then asked all the alderman how they felt about Jeff Grove sending out a letter. Hicks felt that it was a personal letter with the mayor heading on it. Hicks stated that it is a personal letter with all city business but only sharing it with certain people, not everyone in each ward. Hicks was looking for all the alderman's opinions on that letter.

Alderman Lavieri felt it was an informative letter that he sent out and paid for on his own. Lavieri felt like he would be unable to afford to do such a thing. Lavieri also felt that everything that the mayor mentioned on the letter was common knowledge.

Hicks asked for someone else's opinion because he feels that Lavieri and Mayor Grove are pretty close.

Alderman Bacidore mentioned that he is not that close with the mayor but did not think it was a big deal for the mayor to send out such a letter. He said it would be an issue if the mayor was using the city's envelopes. Hicks wanted to know how Bacidore knew he wasn't using city's envelopes. Alderman Bacidore mentioned that Mayor Grove is sharper than that.

Hicks stated that there are repercussions for what Mayor Grove does. He doesn't understand how ethically one can think that is correct. He doesn't understand how the city gives out about 200 tickets for grass but only notifies certain people how high the grass should be.

Jamie Hicks then asked how Brian Zebron, after 26 years of service, was not mentioned at a meeting for retiring. But Hicks found out through the newspaper of this. He asked why Zebron would retire with four years short of his 30.

Alderman Thompson mentioned that he retired with 27 years of service and this was his choice and he could. He stated how Sergeant Zebron chose to do what he was going to do based on what was best for his life. Alderman Thompson assumed that Zebron was over 50 and he was collecting his pension. He is currently working as a police officer in a different city. Thompson stated how this was not an option at the time of his service. He would have retired after 20 years from Peru and came over to work in LaSalle if it was possible. There are new options currently.

Hicks stated that there are a lot of improper actions currently going on within the police department...divorces, homes being wrecked under somebody's watch.

Hicks continued to ask why Zebron was not being recognized for his 26 years of service. Hicks also believes that Zebron and the Mayor do not have a good relationship so that is why it has not been recognized.

Chief Smudzinski stated that Zebron is still on the books with the City of LaSalle. Hicks stated that this is not what the newspaper said. The newspaper posted that he retired on November 26th. Chief Smudzinski stated that he is on the books till after January.

Esta Martinez, 4th Ward Resident, stated that Mayor Grove has a tattletale problem. She originally had messaged the mayor with her concerns as a citizens. She states that the mayor then messaged her husband and he screenshots the conversation that she had with the mayor. She was upset that the issue did not get addressed to her personally but through her husband through a message.

Martinez then wanted to discuss the city's water. Both her and her husband and her sister all have health issues. She has had her water tested and it was four times over the limit of arsenic and other dangerous chemicals. Her family did invest in a Rainsoft, water purification system for their home. She stated that they are paying double because to have clean water for both their pets and themselves. She asked the

gentlemen who was taking the water sample to take a drink and he would not because it was brown. She asked how that is safe and good. She asked the mayor if he would drink the water. He stated that he does drink water. She also mentioned how much it smells of chlorine often. She said that she has to run it several times to ease the smell. She stated that her family can drink the water peacefully now that they have spent over \$1,000 on the Rainsoft system. She said that her pet's health has also improved. She said that her dishes, pets' bowls, and showers are no longer stained because of this system. She wants to know what LaSalle is doing to get better water for all their constituents. She stated that anyone can go to Home Depot, get a water testing kit, and send it out. Martinez continued by saying that the kit will get tested through the EPA and they will then call you back to inform you how bad your water is. Martinez was also upset that their soil was messed up due to a neighbor informing her of this. She was not sure why she was informed of this. She stated that the mayor probably knew and all "his little cronies". She is upset that they have to keep paying and dealing with this nonsense.

Mayor Grove mentioned that he did message Martinez back personally with the a copy of the information that she had asked for. Mayor Grove did mention that he did message her husband also because he does consider him a friend and he wanted her husband to know what conversation he had with Mrs. Martinez. Mrs. Martinez ask if the mayor does do that to everyone and Mayor Grove stated that he does to his friends. Mayor stated that he and Martinez did personally message each other after she had already posted and made a statement via Facebook. Martinez stated that she felt that the Mayor went behind her back and told on her to her husband. Mayor Grove stated that he had basically the same conversation with Martinez and he did with her husband. Martinez questioned that if the Mayor wasn't friends with Martinez's husband, would the mayor have found out who her husband was on facebook and contact him still. She was upset that the mayor sent screenshots of to her husband just because Mayor Grove considered them friends.

Marty Schneider asked why the city was only letting the public know about one of the violations. He stated that he had reached out to Brent Bader and Bader only responded with an explanation of one of the violations. Deputy Clerk Brent Bader spoke and mentioned that Schneider had only mentioned the one violation. Schneider stated that he asked about all of them. Bader stated that Schneider only asked about the one violation that was in the paper and he had answered that violation. Bader stated that he did not respond to Schneider's email that he did send today.

Schneider continued by asking the mayor why the city hasn't been reporting the city's discharge into the Illinois River since 2019. Schneider stated that the city cannot go after Carus for their discharge because the city is in violation themselves. Schneider read the following letter that he stated will be going to the Attorney General and the Pollution Board. He plans on getting others to sign this letter.

Schneider read the following:

"This letter is respectfully requesting that the City of LaSalle hold a public hearing to address the violations by the Attorney General and the pollution board, and are also requesting that this Court allow any concerned citizens ample time to voice their concerns regarding the permitted levels contaminants being discharged into the surrounding waters. We find that these violations by the city of LaSalle to be extremely reckless. The mayor has a history of keeping the citizens of this town in the dark on important matters such as this and cannot be allowed to continue to operate in this manner. He has been able to keep important city business and violations such as the ones in question today. Examples of this are meetings with members of the city at local restaurants in meeting with them individually or one at a time or one person short of the rules requiring him to record the meeting. He avoided letting the residents know about these violations by bypassing it. Instead of announcing it on the city agenda, he snuck it into a meeting where he called for the council to vote on it on the fly by using what's called a straw vote. This is a way for him to force the council to vote on a matter without giving them the time to do their due diligence. Due to the examples given and the severity of the violations, we are requesting an immediate and complete review and investigation of not only their permits, but the permits issued to other major polluters contributing to pollution in our town, Illinois Cement and the Carus Corporation. How can the city of LaSalle be left in charge of issuing discharge permits and keep them from violating them when they themselves have been carelessly violating their own permits? We respectfully request that this review begin with the discharge permits issued to the Carus Chemical Company due to their extensive history of chemical contamination violations and the fact that the Carus company designs and manufactures the hazardous chemicals being injected directly into and other water systems. And they claim this to clean drinking water. We believe this review of their discharge permits is valid and necessary to identify and prioritize their discharge including identify all substances being discharged from this plant into the water and soil surrounding this plant. We recently took water samples directly coming from the discharge pipe and sediment samples directly underneath the pipe where the water lands before the water enters the Vermillion River. They were taken using Lab approved test tubes, documented using official chain of custody paperwork and procedures, and video recorded to show that the results are in fact

from the Carus Chemical Plant. These test results were done by an independent test laboratory recommended by the Sierra Club. The results are attached to this letter. The results show very high levels of zinc, barium, mercury, manganese, and phosphates. So it is clear from these results that the City of LaSalle is negligent and unqualified to oversee or issue these permits. The result of the dangerous chemicals that were recently found into..."

Finance Director John Duncan informed Schneider that he was down to 30 seconds of his public comment portion. Schnieder stated that he would read the rest at the next meeting.

PRESENTATION

Presentation from Horizon House regarding relocation of Community Day Services program to 105 Marquette Street, Suite A.

Michelle Rich, CEO of Horizon House spoke in regards to their relocation of Community Day Services program to 105 Marquette Street, Suite A. She introduced the rest of their team, Director of Programs and Services, Brenda Wetzels, Karen Dergance is Coordinator of Day Services and John Allen is Director of maintenance and transportation. She spoke in regards to moving their Community Services program down to Marquette Street, sometime in February of 2024. She stated that part of their mission is to discover, empower and support opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to achieve their hopes, dreams and desires in the community. She mentioned how Horizon House has had a presence within the City of LaSalle for many decades, especially with their community living programs and as well as other services. Rich stated "how they will be expanding their presence by relocating their community day service program with hours of operations being Monday through Friday 8am to 4pm. They will also be utilizing both available entrances for routine access and exits which are on the north and east side of the building. They plan on utilizing the alley during the times of between 8:30am at 9:30am and between 2:30pm and 3:30pm for drop off and pick up of individuals that are being provided support there. They will also have increase in staff parking. The purpose of this request is to ensure that they are working with the city of LaSalle from the start." She understands that the new presence will increase activity levels on Marquette Street, especially during the times that she mentioned above when it comes to drop off and pickup. They want to make sure to enhance safety of the individuals they serve, of their employees and the downtown residents and the patrons who shop in in LaSalle. She stated that their primary goal is safety. She stated that they did have a list of requests and did not want to do that at this time. She stated that their requests were stated in their letter. She also invited all council members to tour the new location for all to better understand some of their requests. Rich stated that council members could contact herself or John Allen.

Alderman Bacidore stated that he was the Chairman of Streets and Alleys and that he would like to meet with someone in regards to some of their requests. They had one request for 3 handicap spots on Marquette Street. Bacidore felt that they may be a hard request to grant because there are a lot of businesses on Marquette Street. He will be in contact with someone to speak with their requests.

Deputy Brent Bader mentioned that their requests are under petitions on the agenda. He expects them to be forwarded to the Streets and Alleys meeting. Notices will also go out to the community when that meeting is convened.

Chief Mike Smudzinski mentioned to Mrs. Rich how much he appreciates Horizon House programming because he has an uncle that is with the Horizon House. He spoke highly of their programming and has written letters to the state in regards to funding because he stated they do such a “phenomenal job.”

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Bacidore to approve the Minutes of the Regular City Council meeting held November 27, 2023. Each and every alderman has a copy.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION AND POTENTIAL ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING PETITIONS:

Moved by Alderman Bacidore and seconded by Alderman Ptak send the request from Horizon House regarding parking and traffic changes in alley and surrounding area of 105 Marquette Street to the Streets, Alley, and Traffic Committee and Finance Committee to be discussed in two weeks.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Moved by Alderman Lavieri and seconded by Alderman Jeppson to approve the request from PirTano Construction to break ground in the vicinity of 344 N. 30th Rd to install Comcast service extension to International Brotherhood of Teamsters property.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Thompson to send the request for variance from David Raccuglia, represented by Attorney Nick Balestri, regarding lot size on potential subdivision on premises commonly known as 901 Frist Street to be referred to the Planning Commission, more likely than not the Zoning Board of appeals, and more likely than not will be brought back as a small subdivision ordinance.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICERS

Moved by Alderman Bacidore and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to accept, approve, and place on file the monthly police income report for November 2023 showing total fees collected of \$6,704.39. Each and every alderman has a copy.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Thompson to accept, approve, and place on file the Building Inspector's report for November 2023 showing total fees collected of \$1,330.00 with total value of construction of \$340,218.00.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Lavieri to accept, approve, and place on file the Annual Treasurer's Report for the City of LaSalle for the Fiscal Year ending April 30, 2023. Each and every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Finance Director John Duncan stated that the city will be publishing the Annual Treasurer's Report in the newspaper soon.

APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS

Mayor Grove mentioned that Chief Smudzinski mentioned that a few officers were done working with the city physically but because of vacation time and are currently on the books. There will be an official recognition later.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to accept the recommendation of the Finance Committee regarding submittal of an Illinois Travel and Tourism grant.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane, Bacidore

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Alderman Ptak mentioned that the city will be applying for a \$20,000 grant under the Illinois Travel and Tourism grant, costing the city \$10,000.

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to accept the recommendation of the Finance Committee regarding a request from Chad Gilbreth of

Pursuit for Freedom for a Rebuild Commercial LaSalle grant totaling \$40,000 for premises located at 425 First Street. Alderman Ptak stated that it is also a matching grant, so he will be get \$20,000 back if he qualifies.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Ptak, Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane, Bacidore, Thompson

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

OLD BUSINESS

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Bacidore to approve authorization of Pay request #9 for Vissering Construction Company totaling \$106,234.40 for work completed to date on WTP Improvements 2022 project. Each and every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane, Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Thompson to approve authorization of Pay Request #14 for Vissering Construction Company totaling \$5,136.16 for work completed to date on Aerobic Digester Conversion project. Each and Every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane, Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Moved by Alderman Lavieri and seconded by Alderman Jeppsson to approve the authorization of Pay Request #3 for Tieman Builders, Inc. Totaling \$67,170.00 for work completed to date on the New Public Works Building/Wash Bay project. Each and Every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Jeppson, Crane, Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds, Lavieri

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Thompson to approve the authorization of Pay Request #4 for Tieman Builders, Inc. Totaling \$71,621.00 for work completed to date on New Public Works Building Office/Breakroom project. Each and Every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Crane, Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Ptak to approve the authorization of Pay Request #2 for Tieman Builders, Inc. Totaling \$46,000.00 for work completed to date on New Public Works Building Office/Wash Bay Ceiling project. Each and Every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Mayor Grove mentioned to the public that the bills that were just mentioned and voted were part of a bid process and the contractors are submitting bills as they are completing their work.

Jamie Hicks asked why the contractors are doing the work and that the mayor should explain the reason as to why they are doing the work.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Grove shared a photo of Alderman Jeppson, his wife, and their 8th Grade son at Lincoln Junior High from the 8th Grade parent night. The 8th grade basketball team (as 7th Graders last year) had a record of 23-0. This year their record as 8th graders is currently 14-2.

Mayor Grove also wanted to recognize the two chiefs from both LaSalle and Peru working together at a house fire that was recent. There was a picture that he mentioned from Facebook recently.

DISCUSSION AND POTENTIAL ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS:

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Bacidore to approve a resolution amending Resolution 202308 regarding adopting and allocating funds for an

Outdoor Fitness Court then as part of 2023 National Fitness Campaign to now be regarding 2024. Each and every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane, Bacidore

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Thompson to approve a resolution approving a Memorandum of Agreement with the Fraternal Order of Police Labor Council (Patrol Officers). Each and every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Ptak, Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane, Bacidore, Thompson

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Thompson to approve a resolution approving a Memorandum of Agreement with the Fraternal Order of Police Labor Council (Sergeants and Lieutenants). Each and every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane, Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak,

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Mayor Grove wanted to thank all alderman, council members, and city staff for their hard work done this year. He wanted to wish all a Merry Christmas. The next city council meeting will be after Christmas on December 27th.

APPROVAL OF BILLS

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Lavieri to accept, pay, and file the bills from November 27, 2023: Total Submitted: \$676,349.93 (Total Payroll \$219,963.03, Bills to be Paid \$398,858.68, Total Bills Paid \$57,528.22). Each and every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane, Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Crane to adjourn the meeting.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion is carried.

ADJOURNED

7:05

pm

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Quinn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Quinn, City Clerk