

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

OF THE LA SALLE CITY COUNCIL

March 4, 2024

A regular meeting of the La Salle City Council of La Salle, Illinois was held, Monday, March 4, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. with Mayor Jeff Grove with proper notices being duly and continuously posted.

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Present - Aldermen Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds, Jeppson, Crane

Excused Absence – Alderman Lavieri, Herndon

Moved by Alderman Thompson and seconded by Alderman Crane to allow Alderman Herndon to attend meeting remotely via phone call.

ROLL CALL

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

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

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

ROLL CALL

Present - Aldermen Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds, Jeppson, Herndon, Crane

Excused Absence – Alderman Lavieri

Alderman Herndon joined the meeting remotely via phone call. He stated that he hopes to be present with the council in two weeks.

A quorum was present.

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

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Grove asked everyone that wishes to speak tonight to limit their thoughts to five minutes to follow the guidelines. He also asked all audience members to not have any

sidebar conversations and to respect for the person that is at the podium talking. Mayor also reiterated what he has said at the last two meetings, and if there are any questions that one may have during public comment, he will be glad to potentially follow up with the questions afterwards. He said if that's an option to the question or comment asked. He however cannot speak for the other Aldermen. He also reminded all to identify themselves for the record.

Moved by Alderman Jeppson and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to open the public hearing regarding the submittal of an Illinois Department of Natural Resource grant known as a Recreational Trails Program grant regarding intent to develop a Recreational Trails Program Area. **(6:03pm)**

Economic Development Director Curt Bedei welcomed the Mayor and Council, the media and members of the community. Bedei asked the audience to please fill out the signup sheet that is going around. This is a requirement for the city to apply for the grant. He mentioned that the "goal of this project is to establish a trail that links the residential neighborhood of La Salle from either Washington Streets' Dead End or the eastern end of 24th Street to Rotary Park providing greater access for Illinois Valley residents. Bedei mentioned that currently there is no pedestrian access to Rotary Park on the western border. But this project will address this issue by creating a nearly half mile trail that connects to the existing RPP grant trail from Prairie Lake. This will offer a safe and convenient route for residents to explore and enjoy the scenic beauty of prairie Lake and Rotary Park. The scope of the work includes vegetation clearance, trail grading and construction of the pathway. All within aim of enhancing the accessibility and safety of the trail for residents." He stated how the city has a map that also has been posted. Bedie mentioned how this project was mentioned of interest by the community last year when he hosted a community planning session back in October. The vote top getter from the community planning sessions last year was a bicycle pedestrian trail to Rotary Park. They shared the map of the proposal trails. Bedei mentioned how the project is an 80/20 grant, meaning that the grant will be funded 80% by the DNR grant and 20% by the city. The project is a minimum grant of \$200,000, which may be awarded for applications for non-motorized development projects. This grant maximum represents a total minimum project costs of \$250,000 per application.

Mayor Grove mentioned that public comment is same as public hearing, as far as the guidelines.

Deana Hicks asked if this was different than the Pohar trail. Bedei mentioned that it is different, and the Pohar trail was a separate project. She asked if it was for pedestrians only and Bedei stated that it was for both pedestrians and bicycles. Brian Brown mentioned that portion of this current proposed trail is or was part of the plan that Pohar was planning to do.

Alderman Herndon wanted to clarify that this trail would be for bicycles and not motorized bicycles.

Jaime Hicks, 4th ward resident, stated that he comes to these meetings every two weeks, and this was the first he heard about this public hearing for tonight. He said that it was

also not on the agenda that he took off of the internet. Hicks mentioned that the city was going put this type of information in the water bill, so residents know what's going on. He said that this is what happens every time they come in talking about a park grant. He said that the city drops these topics on their laps and residents aren't here to talk about it. He said that it is called transparency. Hicks said that this was the same path that the city already voted on. He asked Attorney Jim McPhedran to explain what a straw vote is and what it actually means. Hicks claims that in this building, it doesn't mean anything. He mentioned how the city did a straw poll and now the project fell through, and now the city is going to pull out a park grant and build a trail. Hicks also stated that the city took a straw vote on testing their homes after the Carus fire and the city has done nothing about that. Hicks does not understand how the city keeps getting to this point and how the city can't be transparent. Hicks mentioned that the city has a multimillion-dollar park in the poorest community in the Illinois Valley. He asked if that makes any sense to anyone in this room.

Eric Dyas, 4th Ward, asked if this path would be going to the fishing lake. Bedei answered yes. Dyas stated that his son has been wanting to fish that lake for years and but didn't want to make the haul there. Dyas was glad to hear that it was going to that lake because it is a resource that the city should be using.

Bedei mentioned that the concept is to shorten that distance to give easier access to people from that end from Rotary Park. He mentioned how difficult it is for bicycles and pedestrians, to go from Route 6 with all the truck traffic. The intent is to cut that distance in half for residents.

Alderman Jeppson did ask the distance on the west end, proposed entrance to the lake, compared to the east end of the park to the lake. Bedei thought a .5 mile from west side compared to 3 miles, roundtrip, from the west end.

Bedei also mentioned that he has three letters of support from LaSalle Rotary, LBA, and the LaSalle State Bank.

Hicks asked if this would be separate from the \$600,000 grant. Mayor Grove mentioned that it is in addition to and separate from that grant.

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Crane to close the public hearing. **(6:11 pm)**

COMMENTS

Mayor Grove informed the audience that if they spoke already during the public hearing, they are welcome to speak again under public comment because it is a separate section for comments. He also reminded the audience to also state their names when they approach the podium.

Jamie Hicks, 4th Ward, noted the final authorization for \$130,000 for the water that was on the agenda tonight. He did not expect answers at the moment, but that that maybe Duncan can supply the information later in regard to the total repairs done to date on the Water Treatment Plant 2022 and related matters. Hicks also noticed within the agenda items that the City is finally applying for grants to replace failing water mains. He was also unsure as to what the community funding program is. Hicks then wanted to discuss a couple of topics about the Open Meetings Act and how this council is running the chambers. He stated how each one of the council members voted on this and he was specifically mentioning section H of this Act, where it states that "each member of the public addressing the public body shall be expected to conform to conventional standards and decorum and shall refrain from making vulgar, insulting and inappropriate remarks towards or any member of the public body, any employee or officer or city or any member of the audience. Each speaker must maintain civility and cannot disrupt an orderly meeting by using obscene or threatening language or gestures. Any person who poses a threat" He called out Chief Smudzinski and then continued on "a threat to public safety will be removed from the meeting." He questioned if talking out of turns was a threat in these chambers. He asked if that was a threat to public safety. He stated that these were the Council's rules and he was a little confused by that. He continued by stating that "the presiding member of the public body and/or is authorized by the majority of the then present Council or Commission or committee members." He said that none of these things happened. He stated that the Council is violating their own rules. He also doesn't understand the conversation that Bader and the Mayor had recorded with the Accountability Angel and the lies and the slander that they presented on his name. He said that they must not have watched the video because he never told anyone on that day "to shut the fuck up". He said that did not come out of his mouth. He also stated to the Mayor that he is not friends with his wife and he can take those words out of his mouth. He continued by telling the mayor to not sit here saying that he is friends with her because he claims to be friends with a lot of people. He continued by stating that "It's about time that you're getting up off your ass. 15 years we've been working on a park and now we're finally working on the infrastructure that you should have been doing when you started your damn job. Because you were an alderman before you were Mayor". He then asked the timekeeper where he was with his minutes. Duncan stated three minutes and 47 seconds. Hicks stated that he was unsure on which speech to follow, the Jeff Grove speech or from the February 5 meeting, that if the Chief felt like he needed to remove anybody that the Mayor gave him total control to do so but Hicks stated that it didn't say it in a document that he was point to. He asked if it was a backdoor policy that the City had. He also stated that Chief Smudzinski "should not have been the one to take me out of this room. And if he ever lays hands on me, and again, there'll be a bigger lawsuit coming than one that's already on his goddamn way. Well, the city's way. Sorry." He continued by stating that Attorney Jim McPhedran was reprimanded four times at that county courthouse by the judge. He said that his arm would have been "jerked out of your socket, you would have been hauled out of here and threatened with arrest". Duncan stated that Mr. Hicks was at his five minutes.

Hicks walked by Deputy Bader and stated that "you have yours coming too, slander boy."

Eric Dyas, 4th Ward, mentioned that he had a couple questions on two buildings.

Hicks interrupted and was given his first warning by the Mayor.

Dyas continued and asked if someone could remind him of the dates on the two buildings, Maytag building for one, that they were supposed to do something with. He questioned why nothing has been done and why the city has not pressured them. Dyas said that it makes this City that everybody has done great work to, look terrible and just disgusting. He feels that they should be held accountable just like anybody else. He said that he does not care who they are, and they should just do what they are supposed to or pay the consequences. He would appreciate if someone could just remind him of the dates. He is concerned with the buildings, particularly the Maytag has Typar falling off and animals could be in and out of there. He asks if someone could just revisit that.

Angel Farmer started her comment time by stating that Jaime Hicks has been given the "full unredacted audio from our encounter". Farmer said that the Mayor and others in the meeting not only exaggerated the situation from February 5, but they also lied. She said that the city's video evidence assisted her in forming this conclusion. Farmers said that Mayor has told her several times that citizens can call, text, email or meet with him. She stated that the Mayor told her that the following words are protected speech during public comment...drug dealer, bitch, liar, referencing pegging, calling a tyrant. She said that the city has forgotten that the title as Mayor and the decorum of the City Council meeting does not give one the authority to criminalize numerous of one's protected freedoms. She stated that she raised her hand for a question, at the end of last meeting, regarding the First Amendment violations and involving turning off all commenting on the city's live streams. She said that audience members pointed it out to the Mayor and it went ignored. Finally, the city attorney got involved and the mayor "gave permission as my master to speak after the City Council voted for it". She said that on February 5, Dawn had a question and was not only called on, but no one had to vote for it. She asked if this was Mayor's form of retaliation for her last speech. Farmer said that she has not done her favorite thing yet, displaying public emails and phone numbers for redress or compliments. Farmer stated that she wasn't upset though when Dawn Hicks was given additional time to ask a question because Hicks "was the same woman who minutes before had nearly half of her speaking time hijacked after witnessing the abuse of another citizen". Farmer continued by stating that "The most important statement you made that day was I want you to have enough courage to say you know I was there. I saw more information. I did my accountability. I did my research. And this is what I came up with". She said that she had emailed the Mayor a handful of times in the past few weeks, and she received no answer. She said that Brent was also emailed and left a voicemail but no response. Farmer said that she saw "a member of your entourage, Julie, at City Hall and request and she tell you that I'd like a response and still got nothing". She said that on February 13, when she was at City Hall on other business, Brent told her that there would be additional persons at their meeting. Farmer said that she notified him that she wasn't

comfortable with that, and it may trigger her anxiety making it harder for her to do her job. She said that the next day when they met as the Mayor had requested, she was "surrounded by four humans" for their meeting, "without a call, email, or warning. She said that she asked the mayor than and asked again, "Mayor, did you, prior to meeting with me, have the knowledge that I did not wish to have a meeting like that? Did Brent tell you, yes or no?" Farmer responded after her own question with "thought so." She then asked the Mayor why is ignoring those emails. She thought she was able to reach the Mayor in that way. She continued by saying that "If he did tell you, then you have failed to respect my boundaries. You recklessly decided to not notify me so I could make a choice. You were not fair. This isn't a problem for me. It's a problem for the people. She said that at the 18:35 mark of their meeting, the mayor claimed to operate as follows: "Hey, can we have a conversation and talk about it because I don't think that was fair." She said that Mayor Grove's behavior since the last public comment is both unfair and unethical. She stated that the Mayor told her that if anyone on his team targets her to let him know. She wanted the Mayor to know that his behavior needs to change, and he needs to do better. She wanted to end her comments with a challenge: "Protect them as a First Amendment. We have the freedom of speech, religion, the press to assemble and petition our government for redress of grievances. I challenge you all to remember these to go home and educate yourself a bit more. I challenge you with your newfound knowledge do the right thing."

She asked Duncan her time. She was at four minutes and 14 seconds. She continued by stating to the Council, "When you see a man being shoved out of a meeting after one warning during public comment. Then their mayor makes any request to violate your freedom, stop it in its tracks. You are elected for a reason and the citizens count on you to not support, nor participate, in any attack on the people." She asked Mayor Grove to admit when he is wrong and have some integrity. She waited for the remainder of her five minutes for Mayor Grove to answer her question. She also had the emails with her that she had sent to the mayor. Duncan informed her that her five minutes were up, and she thanked Duncan.

PROCLAMATION

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Thompson to proclaim April 2024 as Fair Housing Month in the City of LaSalle.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Lavieri to approve the Minutes of the Regular City Council meeting held February 20, 2024. Each and every alderman has a copy.

AYE: Alderman Bacidore, Ptak, Reynolds, Jeppson, Herndon, Crane

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Lavieri **Abstain:** Alderman Thompson

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

DISCUSSION AND POTENTIAL ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING PETITIONS:

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to approve the request for a:

- 2024 Raffle License from Friends of Joe Hettel.
- 2024 Raffle License from Citizens to Elect Greg Vaccaro.
- 2024 Raffle License from Hegeler Carus Mansion.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Moved by Alderman Lavieri and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to approve the request from April Murphy of Hegeler Carus Foundation for a Special Event Permit to allow the use of City-owned property on Fridays from June 7, 2024 through August 23, 2024, excluding July 5, 2024, on 7th Street at the business located at 1307 7th Street.

ROLL CALL

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

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Lavieri **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Moved by Alderman Crane and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to approve the request from Illinois Valley Building Trades Council of the AFL-CIO to hold a Tag Day Collection on Saturday, June 15th at the intersection of 11th and Bucklin Streets.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Alderman Crane mentioned that he had the following item put onto the agenda. The library board has received a few proposals to replace the sign out front of the library. The library board looked into pricing for an LED sign and pricing on just repairs to the current sign. Alderman Thompson asked about any issues that may come about with the brightness of the LED signs. Jeppson mentioned that he had spoke with Brian before the meeting and there are settings to turn these LED signs down 30% after sundown. Alderman Jeppson stated that not everyone on the Library board was convinced on the LED sign, because some felt that it did not fit the aesthetics of the building. Alderman Jeppson is looking for the council support to move forward with the LED sign proposal. This will go through the Library board for official approval. Brian Brown came up with the number 30% after sundown on the LED lights because this was the number required when there was an issue with the 24th St. LED sign.

Moved by Alderman Jeppson and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to show council's support for the Library board to look into a P&D Sign on behalf of LaSalle Public Library to install a double-sided electrical sign at 3305 Marquette Street.

ROLL CALL

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

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Lavieri **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICERS

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Thompson to accept, approve, and place on file the Monthly Police Income Report for February 2024 showing total fees collected of \$4,050.36. Each and every alderman has a copy.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS

Mayor Grove stated that the City does have a resignation from Library Board member Mary Claire Klinefelter. Mayor Grove mentioned that she was on the board for 22 years and was on the board when the library added their addition.

Moved by Alderman Crane and seconded by Alderman Jeppson to accept, with regret, Mary Claire Klinefelter's resignation from the LaSalle Library Board. Alderman Crane thanked Mary Claire Klinefelter for her years of service. Alderman Jeppson stated that she will be missed.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Moved by Alderman Jeppson and seconded by Alderman Crane to accept the appointment of Christopher Bulta to the LaSalle Library Board.

ROLL CALL

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

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Lavieri **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Mayor Grove asked Alderman Jeppson if the Library Board was fully staffed and Jeppson mentioned that they were.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to accept the recommendation of the Finance Committee regarding potential rental of a street sweeper from Standard Equipment for a monthly price of \$13,000.

ROLL CALL

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

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Lavieri **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Alderman Jeppson wanted to point out that the city saved \$6,000 by going with the monthly rate over the weekly rate.

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Thompson to accept the recommendation of the Finance Committee regarding potential replacement of variable frequency drives (VFDs) at the Wastewater Treatment Plant priced at \$51,800 for 2 – 150hp pumps with complete integration of services.

ROLL CALL

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

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Lavieri **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Moved by Alderman Bacidore and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to accept the recommendation of the Streets, Alleys, and Traffic Committee regarding adding a handicapped parking space in front of 1536 Fourth Street.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

City Engineer Brian Brown mentioned that this following amount for approval is for the excavating for the water service lines. This work has not been done yet, but it was for approval for Illinois Valley Excavating, Inc. to do the work. The city had received four bids with Illinois Valley Excavating being the lowest. Brown would like to see this work going as soon as possible. This amount would be for the city to move forward with the proposed work.

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Jeppson to approve authorization to Illinois Valley Excavating, Inc. totaling \$39,750 for work relating to Water Service Line Material Determination Program – 2024 project. Each and every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

AYE: Aldermen Herndon, Bacidore, Thompson, Ptak, Reynolds, Jeppson

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Lavieri **Abstain:** Alderman Crane

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Ptak to approve authorization of Pay request #12 for Vissering Construction Company totaling \$130,330.06 for work completed to date on Water Treatment Plant Improvements 2022. Each and every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

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

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Lavieri **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

NEW BUSINESS

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Crane to approve the authorization of Letter of Support from City Council regarding submittal of a Community Funding Program (CFP) grant to replace failing water mains.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Moved by Alderman Crane and seconded by Alderman Thompson to approve the authorization of Letter of Support from City Council regarding submittal of a Community Funding Program (CFP) grant to reconstruct the truck route on 1st Street in downtown LaSalle.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Moved by Alderman Crane and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to approve the 2024 Road Program.

ROLL CALL

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

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Lavieri **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

COMMENTS

Deputy Clerk Brent Bader mentioned that the city is nearing the E-waste recycling event which he believes to be April 6, 2024. The city had done one back in 2022. The council decided then to have another one two years later from that event. Bader believes that registration will probably be open around the same time as the city's next council meeting. This will be strictly for La Salle residents and located at Rotary Park again. Bader also mentioned that it will be with the same vendor as last time.

City Engineer Brian Brown also wanted to add something in regard to the 2024 Road Program project. He received notice that the Richard Hallett project and the Eighth Street from Crosat to Sterling St. Projects can move forward. The city received federal

funding for those. He mentioned that these two projects can be together and this will help Brown with paperwork. This will not be right away because there will be a lot of back and forth with submittals. He hopes to be constructing those projects, late summer or early fall.

Alderman Herndon asked if the Crosat to Sterling project was 8th Street. Brown said that it was.

Alderman Bacidore stated that he noticed that city's population sign recently showing a population of 9,600. He said that there are three people that come to the meetings saying that they are not doing a good job, but the other 9,597 must think that they are doing a good job.

Alderman Thompson mentioned that he has recently spoke to the gentleman in regard to the Veterans' Memorial at Rotary Park. This memorial is starting by honoring the 33 veterans who lived in LaSalle and gave the ultimate sacrifice. Alderman Thompson stated that this gentleman's vision is mesmerizing. Thompson hopes that the city council can find ways to help out this project.

Mayor Grove mentioned that the city has an Eagle Scout looking to do his eagle project and maybe that is a way he could help out.

Mayor Grove mentioned that the weather has been nice lately and he has been hearing good things about many enjoying the parks, the fishing pond, the trails, and even frisbee golf.

City Engineer Brian Brown mentioned that there will be a ribbon cutting on the disc golf at Rotary Park on March 19th at 2:00pm.

APPROVAL OF BILLS

Moved by Alderman Ptak and seconded by Alderman Crane to accept, pay, and file the bills from February 22, 2024: Total Submitted: \$676,420.84 (Total Payroll \$192,445.72, Bills to be Paid \$166,089.04, Total Bills Paid \$317,886.08). Each and every alderman has a copy.

ROLL CALL

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

NAY: None **Absent:** Alderman Lavieri **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

7:12

pm

Amy Quinn

Amy Quinn, City Clerk