

**CITY OF ITHACA
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
February 2, 2021
7:00 PM**

The regular meeting of the City of Ithaca City Council held and conducted via Zoom Meeting in conformity with Open Meeting Act (Pubic Act 228 of 2020) was called to order by Mayor Schafer at 7:00 p.m. and followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Mayor Schafer gave the invocation.

Present were Mayor Alice Schafer and Councilpersons James Andrew, Scott Gray, James Gruesbeck, Clark Hubbard and Rick Koppleberger. Staff present were City Manager Jamey Conn and City Clerk Cathy Cameron.

Absent was Councilperson Brett Baublitz and Attorney Jefferson Arnold.
Audience in attendance was Rob Endter.

Moved by Gray, second by Koppleberger to excuse Councilperson Baublitz. Motion carried.

Moved by Koppleberger, second by Gray to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the City Council held on January 19, 2021. Motion carried.

Mayor Schafer asked for approval of the Agenda and for Items to be removed from the Consent Agenda. City Manager Conn requested an addition to item 7. Committee Reports, as number iv. DPW Progress. Moved by Andrew, second by Gray to approve the amended Agenda and the Consent Agenda. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Mayor Schafer asked for public comments. Rob Endter stated that it had been a while since he joined a meeting, so was here to say hello and just listen this evening.

Consent Agenda

Moved by Gray, second by Andrew to approve the consent agenda items as listed:

- **City Manager's written report which included updates and information on Phase 1 Security, DPW Director Retirement, May Election, Autonomous Vehicles, Lead & Copper Rule and Horse Barns.**
- **Claims submitted to the Ways and Means Committee by City Treasurer-Finance Director Fandell and recommended for payment: Accounts Payable Checks #47171-47199 and Payroll Checks #16090-16114, DD #1795 -1810, EFT #1227-1233 as listed in the Check Register Book.**
- **Correspondence received: None**

Motion carried by Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: (6) Andrew, Gray, Gruesbeck, Hubbard, Koppleberger and Schafer

Nos: (0) None

Absent: (1) Baublitz

Committee Reports

Mayor Schafer stated that the Committee of the Whole had met. City Manager Conn reported that the committee has recommended that the Council lease the Fire Hall to Gratiot Emergency Services Authority for \$1.00 a year plus all operating expenses associated with the building.

Moved by Gray, second by Koppleberger, to approve the lease of the Fire Hall to Gratiot Emergency Services Authority for \$1.00 a year plus all operating expenses associated with the building. Motion carried.

Mayor Schafer reported that City Clerk Cameron has appointed Shelly Moffit to become her Deputy Clerk. The committee recommends increasing Ms. Moffit's wages by \$1.00 per hour starting February 3, 2021.

Moved by Gray, second by Kopplesberger, to approve a wage increase of \$1.00 per hour for the Deputy Clerk starting February 3, 2021. Motion carried.

Mayor Schafer requested Councilperson Kopplesberger, as Chair of the Personnel Committee, to report on the first annual performance review of City Manager Conn, which was held in closed session at the request of Mr. Conn. Councilperson Kopplesberger reported that the committee recommends increasing the City Manager's salary wage to \$80,000 which is more in line with other area communities of our size. It was pervaded by everyone on the Council that City Manager Conn has done a superb job since coming on board and has exceeded their expectations.

Moved by Kopplesberger, second by Hubbard, to approve a salary wage increase to \$80,000 for the City Manager as of January 25, 2021. Motion carried.

Mayor Schafer added that everyone on Council did express how appreciative they are of the work that City Manager Conn is doing and has been doing during a pandemic. Stating that he certainly came into a situation that no one could have anticipated and has done a magnificent job. Mayor Schafer thanked City Manager Conn on behalf of the entire Council. City Manager Conn expressed his appreciation.

City Manager Conn provided an update on the DPW progress. He has been working on the plan in depth with DPW Director Studt. City Manager Conn inquired if the Council would like him to proceed with posting the DPW position as two separate positions internally. Councilperson Gray referenced the current combined position and inquired if separated, what would the two positions be in reference to the current title/duties of the DPW Director. City Manager Conn stated that the titled positions would be DPW Street Superintendent and Water & Sewer System Superintendent. City Manager Conn stated that DPW Director Studt is working on compiling a separate list of duties for each. Mayor Schafer inquired if these would-be working Superintendent positions. City Manager Conn confirmed that they would be working in the field with the DPW crew.

Moved by Gray, second Andrew, to authorize the internal posting of two separate positions with the titles of DPW Street Superintendent and Water & Sewer System Superintendent. Motion carried.

City Manager Comments

City Manager Conn informed the Council that he has had two inquires regarding the Phase 1 Security Project and they will be taking part in a walk thru of the buildings with him tomorrow on February 3rd. The bid opening will take place at City Hall on February 10, 2021 at 10am. He further informed the Council that there will be a May election at the request of the Ithaca Public Schools and Mid-Michigan College.

City Manager Conn reported that he had been contacted by former Ithaca resident Tim Gates, who is an Associate Professor at MSU. Mr. Gates inquired if there would be support from the City & County regarding a two-phase survey/testing of autonomous vehicles in the area. Mayor Schafer expressed her support of the City being innovative with this prospect. This will be funded by a grant, so therefore no cost to the City. Consensus of the Council was with unanimous support and enthusiasm about the program.

City Manager Conn informed the Council that the building renovations at 105 E Center Street, having added four apartments, is now in need of increasing the water service line for more adequate water pressure. The existing line is made of lead and must be replaced by the City. Upon discovering that the water line runs under the neighboring building on the corner, the DPW has abandon this line and is tapping into the line directly in front of 105 E Center Street. This project required the hiring of a contractor that was able to bore under the sidewalk and into the foundation of the building. The City is mandated by the State Lead and Copper Rule to replace the lead line costing the city between \$5,000 to \$7,000. Councilperson Gray stated that the City has no choice regardless of the cost because it is the law. City Manager Conn confirmed this and stated that the building's owner, Gemini Capital Management has to pay for the upgrades and the material. In addition, they will pay extra towards the

labor cost of doing this during the winter because of the frozen ground. Councilperson Koppleberger inquired on the size of the water line being installed. City Manager Conn replied that the existing line is a 1” and is being upgraded to a 2” line. Councilperson Koppleberger along with Councilperson Hubbard expressed their concerns of having this type of situation occur at Gemini Capital Management’s other building renovations at 146 E Center Street, in addition to having the entire Downtown water lines inspected. City Manger Conn agreed, sharing that he had spoke with DPW Director Studt about this and how it would be more cost effective for the City to do in the Spring/Summer time.

City Manager Conn updated the Council on the roof repairs on the Bigelow horse barn, the demolition of the Brandall barn and possible demolition of the small office building north of the Bigelow barn. Councilperson Andrew inquired if he was recommending the small office building be demolished based on the condition it is in. City Manager Conn replied that if the Council does not want to put any money into fixing it, then it should come down.

Unfinished Business

Mayor Schafer introduced this newly titled agenda item (formerly referred to as Old Business) stating that City Clerk Cameron had shared with her the reference from an updated version of Robert’s Rules of Order. Mayor Schafer requested that City Clerk Cameron advise Council of the update. City Clerk Cameron shared that “*Unfinished Business*” is the term used to consider items of business, if any, carried over from the previous meeting.” This category limits discussions to agenda items from the previous meeting that were in the process of being considered but were tabled to a later date or sent to committee for further discussion and brought back to Council for action to be taken.

New Business

Mayor Schafer presented the Ithaca Public Schools Election Coordinating Agreement. City Clerk Cameron reported that this Election Coordinating Agreement is between the Gratiot County Clerk, the City of Ithaca and surrounding Townships within the school district. The four-year agreement serves as a continued collaboration of our duties and responsibilities to conduct all elections for the Ithaca Public Schools.

Moved by Gray, second by Koppleberger to approve and authorize the City Clerk to sign the Election Coordinating Committee Agreement with the Ithaca Public Schools. Motion carried.

Mayor Schafer introduced Resolution #2021-02: Resolution to Allow Local Residents to Protest in Writing to the Board of Review. City Clerk Cameron reported that this resolution allows for residents to protest their tax assessments in writing. This is due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and regulations placed on public gatherings and meetings. The March Board of Review will be held electronically via Zoom. City Clerk Cameron further reported that the Zoom Meeting links will be printed on the residents Tax Assessment Notice and will be posted on the City website. Councilperson Gray agreed with the convenience of allowing residents to appeal to the Board in writing and attend a meeting via Zoom. He inquired if this was permanent or only for this year due to COVID-19 restrictions. City Clerk Cameron stated that the ability to protest in writing will remain in force, however the future of in person meetings will be subject to legislative order and restrictions due to COVID-19.

Moved by Gray, second by Andrew to support and adopt Resolution #2021-02: Resolution to Allow Local Residents to Protest in Writing to the Board of Review.

Motion carried by Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: (6) Gray, Gruesbeck, Hubbard, Koppleberger, Andrew and Schafer

Nos: (0) None

Absent: (1) Baublitz

Mayor Schafer presented the Proclamation: Random Acts of Kindness. Mayor Schafer shared with the Council that Mrs. Meier had retired as a Kindergarten Teacher and bringing her students to the Council annually for this

special presentation will be missed. City Clerk Cameron reported that Mrs. Meier had stopped into City Hall to deliver kind bars and a card of appreciation to all of Council. She was disheartened to report that her legacy of sharing in Random Acts of Kindness with her kindergarten students over the past 15 years has not been embraced by other teachers to continue on the tradition. City Clerk Cameron replied that the City would continue spreading awareness within the community and acknowledge her efforts with a proclamation every year. Mrs. Meier was appreciative. Mayor Schafer stated that Mrs. Meier spent a lot of time on this worthwhile lesson and that her students were blessed to have her for a teacher. Mayor Schafer agreed that the Council would be honored to carry on her efforts to spread kindness.

Public Comment

Mayor Schafer asked for public comments. Rob Endter shared that as Chair of the Board of Review, he is in full support of the efforts made to allow residents to appeal in writing and attend meetings via zoom.

Mayor Schafer asked for any additional business to come before the Council. None was offered.

Moved by Koppberger, second by Gray to adjourn. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:36pm.

Approved 2-16-2021

Cathy Cameron

Cathy Cameron, City Clerk