

ST. ALBANS CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting Monday, May 9, 2011 City Hall, Council Chambers

A regular meeting of the St. Albans City Council was held on Monday, May 9, 2011, in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Council Present: Mayor Martin Manahan; Aldermen: Tim Hawkins, Joseph Luneau, Aaron O'Grady, Richard Peters, Chad Spooner, Jeff Young.

Staff Present: Dominic Cloud, City Manager; Peg Strait, Director of Finance and Administration; Sarah Duffy, City Accountant; Susan Krupp, City Clerk/Treasurer; Jane Kiser, Community Development Manager; Allen Robtoy, Public Works Director; Jim Tischler, Director of Planning & Community Development.

Visitors: see attached sign-in sheet.

1. Mayor Manahan called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Public Comments. Ms. Gamache requested clarification from the Council. She stated that at the last regular Council meeting [4/11/11] she was concerned with some observations that she had made during the presentation of the proposed restructuring of the Planning and Development Office. She stated that her perception was that the Council was possibly changing strategic objectives.

John Casavant, resident of St. Albans City, stated that he feels the City leadership is doing a good job but is concerned about his taxes continuing to increase. He's also concerned about the additional costs with recreation along with increasing water and sewer fees and property taxes. He estimated that it's going to cost him approximately \$7,500 in City expenses. He said that recently Kelly Viens, Recreation Director, was given the directive that the City Pool has to pay for itself. He stated that the City has a great swim program that has been in existence for years but this year it's going to cost him \$800 for his four kids for a six week program and that as a family they will have to make the decision whether they will participate this year or not. He stated that, as a City, we are demographically challenged and that St. Albans isn't what it used to be 10-15 years ago. He also stated that due to the fact of high density low income housing in St. Albans, we need to be strategic in attracting a diverse population to the City. We need to ask ourselves, what would attract middle income families to this area. He doesn't feel that we should be using user fees to fund the pool. He said that other departments, like Public Works or Police are not expected to be self-sufficient. Alderman Hawkins asked Mr. Casavant if what he was saying is "community participation includes community funding." Mr. Casavant replied in the affirmative. He stated that he

feels that we are moving in the right direction by offering community policing, recreation, and fire. Spreading the costs across both the Town and City would be more efficient and would benefit both City and Town residents.

Council Comments.

Mayor Manahan commented on the above public comments. He said that he agrees with Ms. Gamache that when a budget is set, then we need to stick to it. Although, he stated that whenever the City has a staff vacancy, the Council does evaluate the position at that time to determine whether the City can be run more efficiently. He also said that a position shouldn't be cut just to save money. In reference to Jane Kiser, who over the years has brought in a copious amount of money for the City through grants she has written, has more than validated her position. He doesn't think it would be prudent to eliminate her position since it is a source, in addition to taxes, of generating funds for the City.

In response to Mr. Casavant's comments, Mayor Manahan agrees that the pool should be supported by the tax dollar. He feels that it's a quality of life issue and it's something that makes our community more attractive than some of the surrounding communities for people looking to relocate. He said that we need to reevaluate what we're charging communities outside the City limits that are using our recreation programs and facilities. Possibly, they're not paying their fair share. He said that this is something that needs to be worked on.

Alderman Hawkins explained, in response to Ms. Gamache's comments, that during the budget talks before it is presented to the public, there are many discussions that include concessions that are not often on camera. He said that the Council has an obligation whenever there is a staff vacancy to look to see if there are inefficiencies and if so, to improve upon them.

Alderman Spooner commented on the renovations to the railway tracks for the high speed rail system. He feels that the Lake Street tracks are much better than they were and he's also received a complaint on the Lower Welden tracks. Mr. Robtoy expressed his concerns with the tracks, and overall, said he was disappointed with the job. He said he was going to be meeting with the company tomorrow to discuss his concerns. He also discussed the schedule of the remainder of the crossings. Discussion ensued about the various railroad crossing locations within the City and the expectations of each.

3. Notice of Award for Demolition and Environmental Abatement at the Former Fonda/Solo (Discussion and Vote) – Jim Tischler. Mayor Manahan explained that although the item is down for discussion and vote, it's only going to be discussed tonight. Mr. Tischler presented this item and gave a summary of the bidding process. Eight bids were received. He explained that the lowest bidder was OpTech based out of Syracuse, NY. He also reviewed the notice of award process. The total amount of the bid to date is approximately \$898,000. The total amount of money the City has committed to date is \$600,000. He pointed out additional sources of funding that are being tapped to close the gap. He stated that the City is in line to receive approximately \$300,000 for the project. He said at this time, the administration is requesting Council support for this phase of the project. He stated that the second notice of award will be presented to the Council at its June 13 meeting. Alderman

Luneau stated that he is concerned that the taxpayer's don't get stuck with part of the bill. He asked for clarification of the demolition process as well as what this phase includes. Mr. Tischler reviewed the details of this phase. Alderman Luneau also asked what the timeframe is for receiving a response from the other funding sources. Mr. Tischler said "in about ten days." Alderman Hawkins asked why the Council isn't voting on this item tonight. Mr. Cloud stated that there is information in the Executive Session that the Council needs in order to vote on this item. Discussion ensued about the contract and the contingency about receiving financing. Mr. Tischler stated that the award contract includes a statement contingent on whether we receive the additional funds. Mr. Tischler also explained the disparity between the bids. Alderman Spooner inquired how the contaminates would be disposed of. Mr. Tischler explained the process on this subject. Alderman Peters asked when the starting date is. Mr. Tischler replied that initially it was scheduled for late May but has been rescheduled to late June. For the record of why the Council is scrutinizing the demolition costs and so the public understands why they are questioning it, Alderman Hawkins reviewed the bids that were submitted. He stated that the answer to this is that the winning bid that was considerably lower than the rest, is taking advantage of the steel that can be reclaimed. Mr. Tischler stated that the reason is that the company is going to recycle the steel which is in great demand.

4. Update of Anti-displacement and Relocation Resolution for Receipt of Federal Funds (Discussion and Vote) – Jane Kiser. Ms. Kiser is out of town. Mr. Tischler made the presentation on her behalf. **A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman O'Grady. Motion passed unanimously.**
5. City Manager's Proposal for Re-structuring Planning and Development Dept. (Discussion and Vote). Mr. Cloud presented this proposal. See attached City Manager's memorandum, which includes a breakdown of the grant awards and the cost analysis of hiring a consultant. The City Manager requested that the Council allow him to go ahead with his original plan that he proposed during the budget work sessions. Alderman Spooner said that he is on the fence about the issue, but has some concern about the management of the grants once they're procured and fears that if not done correctly, there is the possibility of having to repay the money. Alderman Luneau said that he does not support the City Manager's position on this issue and explained his reasoning. He feels that there are many projects that are a high priority that the City wants to undertake but little or no money budgeted for them. Mayor Manahan expressed his thoughts regarding why this particular position is so critical due to the fact that this position seeks sources for additional money for the City. Alderman Luneau asked Mr. Cloud whether he had considered making this a part-time position. Mr. Cloud explained the reason why it's necessary for the position to remain a full-time position. Discussion ensued about full-time versus part-time as well as the responsibilities of the different positions within that department. Chris Dermody shared his thoughts from a Planning Commission perspective with the Council. Megan Manahan shared her thoughts from the DRB perspective. Mr. Robtoy shared his thoughts on this issue. Mr. Bushey commented on the fact that Allen Robtoy was mowing the lawn in Taylor Park this past Sunday. Mr. Bushey said that he is supportive of this position. Ms. Gamache thanked them for the discussion as well as the fact that they tied it into the goals. **A motion was made by Alderman Young; seconded by Alderman Peters to endorse the City Manager's**

proposal for re-structuring the Planning and Development Department. Vote: 6-1 with Alderman Luneau voting against.

6. Planning Commission Appointments (Discussion and Vote). There were three candidates that applied for the vacancy: Sue Prent, Casey Toof, and Ryan Doyle. They each shared their reasons for wanting to be on the Commission. Jim Tischler stated it is a three year term. **A motion was made by Alderman Luneau; seconded by Alderman Peters to nominate Casey Toof to the Planning Commission. A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Mayor Manahan to nominate Ryan Doyle to the Planning Commission. A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman O'Grady to appoint Sue Prent. Vote was three for Toof—Alderman Luneau, O'Grady, Peters. Vote was three for Doyle—Mayor Manahan, Alderman Hawkins, Spooner . Vote was one for Prent—Alderman Young; Vote to withdraw one for Prent—Alderman Young; Vote was four for Doyle—Mayor Manahan, Alderman Hawkins, Spooner, Young. Ryan Doyle was appointed to a three year term on the Planning Commission.**
7. Update on Re-appraisal (Ed Clodfelter). Mr. Clodfelter made a PowerPoint presentation on the re-appraisal and he explained the process that was undertaken to complete the task. Questions and answers between the Council and Mr. Clodfelter followed the presentation.
8. Community Justice Center Request re: Housing for Re-Entry Clients (Discussion and Vote). Tammy Kennison, Probation & Parole & Bob Begley, Coordinator of the COSA program, and Marc Wennberg, Director of the Justice Center. Marc gave an overview of what the program would be. Bob Begley and Tammy Kennison shared their perspectives. Discussion ensued about the various details of how the program would work. **A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Luneau to approve the Community Justice Center's Request for Transitional Housing Program. Vote was unanimous.**
9. Cadillac Hotel Presentation of Steps to Ensure Operating as a Hotel. Mayor Manahan gave the background information of when the Cadillac had first come before the Council and that part of the findings is that they would come back before the Council to articulate how they were going to operate as a hotel. Alderman Luneau excused himself due to a conflict of interest. Alderman Hawkins asked if staff could offer their input on the status of this item. Mr. Tischler updated the Council on the status and stated that since the time of the Council's finding letter dated August 20, 2010, the Planning Commission adopted amendments to the Land Development Regulations in which the definition of hotel establishments has been defined. Paul Jarvis, attorney, spoke on behalf of the owners. He explained that there is a full-time on-sight manager now and also addressed the concerns in the letter that outlined the corrective plan.
10. Introduction and Overview of Fire Department (Acting Chief Taylor). Acting Chief Taylor gave an overview of the department. He stated that the new fire truck has been delivered. Two new policies have been implemented. He reiterated that he needs some clear direction from the Council on where this department is heading. Mayor Manahan said it would be forthcoming. Alderman Hawkins asked about overtime. Chief said that he's over budget on the overtime. The building inspection program is up and running.

11. Introduction and Overview of Public Works (Allen Robtoy). Mr. Robtoy stated that it was a very brutal winter for the department, especially with plowing sidewalks. He stated that the department needs another sidewalk plow. He also updated the Council with the summer paving schedule.
12. Financial Report. Ms. Strait gave the overview of the financial status of the general fund for the City. Ms. Duffy gave an overview of the water & wastewater.
13. Clerk/Treasurer Report. Ms. Krupp said that there was nothing to report—only that she is trying to schedule a BCA meeting in the near future for reappraisal appeals.
14. Other Business. There was none discussed.
15. Warrants (Discussion and Vote):
 - a. Payroll—4/7, 4/14, 4/21, 4/28
A motion was made by Alderman Peters; seconded by Alderman Spooner to accept the Payroll Warrants of 4/7, 4/14, 4/21, 4/28. Vote was unanimous.
 - b. Accounts Payable—4/20 & 5/4
A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Luneau to accept the Accounts Payable Warrants of 4/20 & 5/4. Vote was unanimous.
16. Executive Session.
A motion was made by Alderman Young; seconded by Alderman Spooner to enter into executive session to discuss real estate acquisition and civil matters where premature disclosure would compromise the City or person involved. Vote was unanimous.

Submitted by,

Sarah Longley
Administrator Coordinator