

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE LA SALLE CITY COUNCIL**

June 27, 2022

A regular meeting of the La Salle City Council of La Salle, Illinois was held Monday, June 27, at 6:30 p.m. with proper notices being duly and continuously posted.

Alderman Ptak called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Alderman Herndon

A quorum was present.

Moved by Alderman Lavieri and seconded by Alderman Jeppson to nominate Alderman Ptak as Mayor Pro-Tem for the remainder of meeting.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

ROLL CALL

Present - Pro-Tem Mayor Ptak, Aldermen Bacidore, Thompson, Reynolds, Lavieri, Jeppson, Crane

Absent: Alderman Herndon

Others Present: Deputy Clerk Brent Bader, Economic Development Director Leah Inman, Superintendent of Public Works Patrick Watson, Fire Chief Jerry Janick, Treasurer Virginia Kochanowski, City Attorney James McPhedran, Mayor Jeff Grove (arrived at 6:41pm).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Thompson to approve, accept and place on file the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City Council held June 13, 2022. Each and every alderman has a copy.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION AND POTENTIAL ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING PETITIONS:

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Bacidore to approve the request from Tammy Humpage to hold a Tag Day Collection on Saturday, August 6, 2022 at the intersection of 11th and Bucklin streets for St. Jude Run to Peoria.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Moved by Alderman Reynolds and seconded by Alderman Bacidore to approve the request from Designs & Signs on behalf of Abundant Life Fellowship to install an illuminated wall sign and a single-facing, non-illuminated wall sign at 450 Hennepin Street. Each and every alderman has a copy.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Alderman Lavieri asked about the purpose of the curb to be cut when the residence has a driveway. Deputy Clerk Bader stated that the residents are looking to widen their drive. Engineer Brown and Building Inspector Bacidore are both aware of this request.

Moved by Alderman Jeppson and seconded by Alderman Lavieri to approve the request from Mike and Stephanie Coons for a curb cut to put in a driveway at 1480 Linden Avenue.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICERS

Moved by Alderman Lavieri and seconded Alderman Jeppson to approve and place on file the Illinois Department of Revenue report showing sales tax collected for March 2022 at \$87,706.53 and Home Rules Sales Tax on \$75,684.88 for a total on \$163,391.41. Each and every alderman has a copy.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS

Moved by Alderman Lavieri and seconded by Alderman Thompson to accept and place on file the thank you letter from 76th District State Representative Lance Yednock.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Deputy Bader read the Letter from United States Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Moved by Alderman Jeppson and seconded by Alderman Thompson to accept and place on file the thank you letter from United States Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Alderman Bacidore stated that the Streets, Alleys and Traffic committee tabled the recommendation regarding adding a "Handicapped Parking" sign in front of 1216 Third Street.

The petitioner was not present for the committee to ask some questions to. There was a neighbor opposed to the "Handicapped Parking" sign.

Deputy Bader asked if he would be able to contact the petitioner to see if he did have a Handicap placard and if he wanted to show to the next SAT committee meeting in 2 weeks. Chairman Ptak stated that it would be in the petitioner's favor to attend the meeting if he was physically able to.

Moved by Alderman Bacidore and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to accept and approve the recommendation from the SAT committee regarding adding a "Handicapped Parking" sign in front of 338 Tonti Street.

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion carried.

Alderman Bacidore asked Deputy Clerk Bader to place a work order for the sign.

OLD BUSINESS

Moved by Alderman Lavieri and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to authorize pay estimate #6, Base Bid to Municipal Well & Pump totaling \$30,870.00 for work completed to date on the New Water Supply Well #13 project.

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

NAY: None

Absent: Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

NEW BUSINESS

Alderman Bacidore asked about the yellow painted curb on McArthur Street. This was not approved at the last SAT committee meeting. There was also not a work order place for this job. Mayor stated that it was a mistake by the summer help. They painted the wrong side of the curb. Mayor will keep 10 feet from the stop sign yellow but will correct the curb by painting the other portion of the curb gray.

Alderman Bacidore asked if the city would do anything in regard to the Journey Band canceling their performance at the LaSalle fest. Alderman Ptak that after the other replacement band was hired, that topic was dropped.

Alderman believes that they do have to continue to hire out the bigger bands in order for LPAC to make money. They do allow for a few local bands to play but the bigger bands do draw in the people.

The band decision comes from the LPAC committee.

Alderman Bacidore asked for the City of LaSalle to hire all local bands one year to see how well they would do.

Deputy Bader stated that Mike Nieslawski was the one in charge of the car show this year. He was unable to make the meeting, but he thanked the council, specifically the

police department, for all their support with the car show. He asked for the councilmembers to all receive a car show dash plate/placard.

COMMENTS

Nathan Watson, from CL enterprises, spoke to council on updates of their downtown projects. He stated that the project at 801/805 First Street should be up and running again shortly after having to terminate the initial contractor of construction for non-performance. Watson hopes to announce a new contractor very soon and he anticipates the new contractor will be able to give us a schedule for completion of the building. There will be two contracts for the project, one for the exterior and the apartments and the site improvements. That was the contract that he had to terminate previously. And then the second contract will be for the interior and completion of the Tangled Roots Brewing Company Restaurant. He hopes to be able to share very soon a finalized arrangement with the contractor and a schedule for completion from the contractor. Watson stated that he has 10 groups working on this and the CL real estate development team are working on it. Watson informed the council that the principals of CL enterprises, Carus and Limberger, are committed to seeing this project completed.

Watson then continued the updates in regard to the Kaskaskia. The City obtained a search warrant for the property, the results of this will be made available to all parties soon. Watson said he looks forward to receiving that and will take the results seriously. Watson does share the same concern as the city council, the same concerns for the preservation of the building, safety of the community and the renovation of that building for rebuilding downtown LaSalle. He stated that they are still working towards a new plan for the full renovation of the hotel tower, the event space, the sidebar, the rooftop, and the apartment building. Watson stated that with the COVID lockdowns, it set back their plan substantially. They are continuing to work hard to come up with a new plan that is viable financially and can be financed. There are investors and financial institutions interested in that. And he believes they've identified ways of doing that. He hopes that within a couple of months, they will be able to give the city more direction of that. Watson then spoke of preservation activities that will need to be continued to be done. They have already spent about \$1.6 million on tuckpointing, rebuilding parts of the tower, some modest roof repairs, along with the roof of the garage being rebuilt. He anticipates that there will be some things that come out of the report from the study that the city will ask to also be addressed. Watson appreciates the city's commitment that they have given previously in the development agreement for the Kaskaskia and understands the city's anxiety about getting these projects done.

Mayor Jeff Grove stated that the city will put a little pressure on Mr. Watson and his team and something little will get done. Mayor does not feel that COVID is an excuse that can be used for the delay in his project. Contractors were getting the green light to return back to work, other City projects were getting done, Gary Hammers project and Mike Bird's project. Mayor also asked Watson how many other projects that he did complete during this timeframe.

Watson did not feel that it is fair to compare projects when every project is different. He stated that he was using this contractor for only this one project of his. The contractor was the one using COVID as an excuse for the delay on this project. He did have a project completed in Lockport, by a different contractor. He expected this Brewpub project to be completed in the same timeframe.

Watson is just as disappointed as the city is with this project, contractor, and timeline. They are paying the price publicly but are also financially. The contractor was fired and they started the process again with rebidding the project to other contractors with unfortunately higher costs now.

Watson did mention the two projects that were recently completed in the last year. Lockport opened up in January 2021 and Dekalb opened in September 2021.

Mayor Grove stated that during the second meeting in June last year, Alderman Bacidore brought up his concerns about this project, and all council members did concur with him. Mayor then called for a meeting with Watson and Leah Inman probably June 14th or 15th of 2021. Watson committed that it'd be done in March of 2022. Mayor questioned Watson's timeline because he stated it was on the same timeline as Lockport, which opened in January 2021 and they met with Watson five months after that.

Mr. Watson pointed out that he was giving the contractor a chance to get the work done knowing he was shorthanded. The work did start to trail off and then it came to a total stop. Watson admitted that it was certainly later than expected but the contract was ultimately terminated.

Mayor Grove wanted the press to know that the contractor was Trotter Contracting out of Macomb and the Mayor understands that there are always two sides to a story. He does want to remain partners throughout this project but he also has 9,000 citizens asking about the two buildings downtown. The city was told March 2022 and then hoped for June 2022. But nothing has been done. Mayor felt that if there was a partnership, the city would not have had to get an administrative warrant to review the property. Mayor stated that he feels that Watson and his team are a very knowledgeable business group. Mayor Grove suggested to Watson they could give the building back to the city, take a loss on their taxes, and the city can get some general who will take care of all buildings. The Mayor mentioned that he has people who are just chomping at the bit to get their hands on that building to finish the project. Mayor reiterated to Watson and his team that it's been too long and it's time to really get it done.

Alderman Bacidore asked Watson that if this was his house wouldn't he have fired this contractor two or three months of no work, not two years later. He questioned why there was so much wait time to fire a contractor that is not completing the work.

Watson felt that he already answered this question. There is a lot of work done behind the scenes on projects, especially one like this that is a complicated project. He felt that his team is working diligently and they will continue to work aggressively to see this project done.

Alderman Bacidore felt that his question was still not answered by Watson. Watson stated that everyone had a very rough year with COVID. He stated that contractors were having issues with workers and quarantines and the workers were afraid to come to LaSalle County because of the high death rates. Watson says that many people should be able to relate to the frustration that they were dealing with a contractor's timeline. They may say it will be done in three weeks and it's never done in three weeks. This project is a larger scale of that. Watson does admit that the hiring of the contractor should have been done 6 months prior, if not a year prior.

Alderman Bacidore asked about the hotel timeline and how Watson stated that they were ready to go in 2020. Watson stated that he had 28 million in tax credits and investors committed. COVID did put a halt on the hospitality financing market. Watson was unaware of the timeline of completion back in 2020 because no one had a true indication if it was going to be weeks or months. Watson did know by June 2020 there was no money left for the project. They did not ask to borrow any money at the time because banks were not sure if hotels were going to start to default on payments. Watson mentioned that his team was so committed to this project, they spent hundreds of 1000s of dollars to complete the details. Bacidore was confused by this statement because he thought back when they presented this project all details were finalized. Bacidore reminds Watson of all the design pictures and books that he presented to Bacidore and the council when discussing the plans for the hotel. Watson claims that you can go into a closing with 50% construction documents.

Alderman Bacidore asked Watson when the new contractor will start on the First St. project. Watson stated that they just received bids last week and the team will be evaluating those and have some fine tuning to do. Bacidore assumed that bids will be a lot higher now also. Watson agreed. Bacidore stated that Kaskaskia bid was originally at 32 million and now he assumes it probably would go up to 40 million. Watson asked if Bacidore wanted him to answer his question about the bid amounts. Bacidore stated he would like to hear his answer but he will probably be blowing more smoke. Watson stated that the "interrogation" was over and he thanked the council for his time. Watson welcomed the council to contact him at any time about this project. They can stop by his office or email him with any questions.

Alderman Crane asked if Watson's team member, Raphael, would like to speak. He said "No. No, Thank you."

Mr. Watson and his team member exited the meeting at 7:13pm.

Mr. Gary Hammers asked the council if they knew of how the other projects that were completed by Mr. Watson's team and who the contractors for those projects were.

Alderman Crane was questioning the same thing. Crane recalls a meeting with Mr. Watson at the start of the projects in which he asked about using local help. Watson mentioned to Crane some local contractors' names and some that he would like to use. Crane does not recall seeing one of the trucks down on the jobsite as a local contractor's truck.

Alderman Crane was upset with how much Mr. Watson used COVID as an excuse. Crane works in the trades and he had to quarantine at one time. He did his 10 days at home and returned back to work right after. Crane mentioned how Mr. Hammers had projects happening through COVID and if Hammers checked on his contractors and jobsites daily.

Economic Development Director Inman mentioned Watson's lack of mention of dates and timelines. If he is having financial conversations, he should have more accurate dates and timelines for the projects.

Alderman Reynolds believes if the city and council keep putting pressure on people, the more reluctant they are to get the job done. Reynolds asks what the city will do with both properties if the project managers walk away from them and say they are done.

Mayor Grove states he has people that are interested in stepping into the project to complete if need be.

Deputy Clerk Bader wanted the audience and media to know that these conversations happen publicly because many citizens reach out to the city and question the safety and progress of the building. Bader said this is the City's way of trying to answer the questions of the public and follow-up on their concerns, as the City does with every project and concern. City Attorney McPhedran also stated that the City of LaSalle is wanting to stay as transparent to the public.

Mayor stated that the City reached out to the group prior to the meeting to see if anyone would be in attendance, but they responded with no. City Building Inspector, Andy Bacidore, would have been in attendance but it was his anniversary and Mayor was informed that no one would be in attendance and then Mr. Watson showed up. Bacidore, as Building Inspector, had questions for them that the Council did not feel comfortable enough with asking without him present. Bader wanted all to know that the city will continue to keep the public and media informed of any other information or questions that they get answered.

Alderman Ptak wants the Council to acknowledge that Watson made a mistake, he does know that Watson is talking with one of the contractors from possibly the Lockport project, and he understands the inability to find and keep good contractors in this current climate. Alderman Ptak also feels that it would be impossible to find a local contractor that would want to take over the hotel project.

Alderman Thompson has faith in the hotel project. Thompson does agree that the Kaskaskia project will need \$35 million in renovations. He stated that Watson did tell

him that by September 2022, the city should be seeing action happening on First St. Watson also told Thompson that he expects to see retail in the Kaskaskia building by December 2022. As the new guy, Thompson mentioned that he can be patient for 6 months but he will join his fellow alderman, Bacidore, and question progress if nothing is done.

Mr. Hammers mentioned how Mr. Watson's words for the Kaskaskia were "New Plan, Full Renovation".

Thompson mentioned how the Kaskaskia was not explained to him in that way. He believed it to be different phases with storefronts happening first. Ptak also believed that there will be multiple phases to these projects.

Mayor Grove did ask Alderman Ptak what he would like to do in a year when no progress happens. Ptak was not ready to answer that at this time.

Leonard Keenan asked if anything was noticeably fixed when anyone had made a recent tour through. Alderman Thompson mentioned the tuckpointing, some window work, and garage in the back. There was structure work done, but nothing noticeably done internally.

Alderman Reynolds agrees with everyone's frustration with these projects, but there are other abandoned projects and buildings that the city is not doing anything about. He believes these conversations do not need to continue in the chamber.

Mayor Grove does believe that the council does need to be transparent with the public and the media and this is why these conversations are happening. This City Council was fully on board with all the incentives that this group offered with the hotel. There were incentives like sales tax, pillow tax and TIF with no money up front.

There were no more comments from the public.

APPROVAL OF BILLS

Moved by Alderman Lavieri and seconded by Alderman Crane to accept, authorize, and place on file the bills from June 13, 2022. Total Submitted: \$737,931.06 (Total Payroll \$192,815.97, Bills to be paid \$338,246.26, Total Bills Paid \$206,868.83). Each and every alderman has a copy.

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

NAY: None

Absent: Alderman Herndon **Abstain:** None

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

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

Voice vote, all ayes. Motion is carried.

ADJOURNED 7:34pm

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

Amy Quinn, City Clerk