

CITY OF FULTON
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
July 8, 2024
5:30 p.m.
Held at Cattail Park

Regular Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wendy Ottens at 5:30 p.m. On roll call, Alderpersons Banker, Boonstra, Brondyke, Burggraaf, Mask, VanKampen and Wilkin were present. Alderperson King was absent. Community Service Officer Wherry, City Attorney Huizenga, Business Manager Garibay, Business Manager-in-Training Hemling and City Clerk Wade were also in attendance.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mayor Wendy invited Gurlabh Singh from Eagle River Liquor to present to the Council his business plan for his property at 1601 10th Avenue in Fulton. He stated he plans are to expand the square footage of the store to have room for a larger gathering area for residents. He plans to have a full bar inside the store.

Mayor Wendy said the Council will need to discuss this because Singh will have to have an A liquor license. He has an A-1 liquor license right now which he would have to surrender if granted an A license. There will be no action taken on this tonight.

Alderperson Boonstra asked Singh what the capacity this gathering place will hold. Singh replied approximately 25. Alderperson Mask asked if they would service food, Singh replied, no. Alderperson Wilkin asked if he would have video gaming, he replied, yes.

Mayor Wendy explained for clarification that Singh presently has an A-1 liquor license, the A license allows him to have the bar which he has to have in order to have video gaming. He can't have the video gaming with just an A-1 license.

Singh explained his plans for moving the drive-thru and re-arranging the current layout of the property. The building will be the same footprint in size, just laid out differently.

Singh explained to the Council the purpose of the bar would be to allow customers the opportunity to try a small amount (a shot) of a very expensive alcohol brand, when purchasing the whole bottle is not affordable to the customer.

Aldersperson Boonstra said that this is a trend in bars that is gaining popularity. He has seen it in his travels where people are seeking out these bourbon bars. Mayor Wendy asked if this is something that other bars in the area do not offer. Singh said that is correct.

Mayor Wendy went on to appointments. She appointed Aley Hamling as a Deputy Clerk. Business Manager Garibay said that Hamling needs this role in order to take over any and all duties of the City Clerk in case of her absence. Renee Grant is also a Deputy Clerk for the City.

Recognitions – Chief Neblung recognized Sergeant Adam Wherry for his 21 years of dedicated service to the community and wish him well as he transitions into a new position of Community Service Officer.

Communication from Visitors – None

Mayor Wendy asked for a motion to approve the Council meeting minutes from June 10, 2024, the Bill List and the Treasurer’s report.

Aldersperson VanKampen made the motion. Aldersperson Brondyke seconded.

Aldersperson Mask asked to make a correction on page 9 of the June 10 minutes stating that she was not asking fellow Alderspersons to come to a Tourism meeting, but was asking them to please visit Fulton’s many attractions. Also, she requested that the attractions are always in need of volunteers if anyone has any suggestions.

On roll call, all yes, with corrections. (Aldersperson King was absent.)

Motion passed.

Mayor Wendy asked for a motion to approve a Letter of Understanding – The City of Fulton, Illinois and the Illinois Fraternal Order of Police Labor Council Lodge #766 have agreed to a one-time exception to allow the Chief of Police to work specific hours regularly worked by members covered by the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Motion made by Aldersperson Mask. Seconded by Aldersperson Boonstra.

On roll call, all yes. (Aldersperson King was absent.)

Motion passed.

Mayor Wendy asked for a motion to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement By and Between the Board of Education of River Bend Community Unit School District No. 2 and the City of Fulton for a School Resource Officer (SRO) Program.

Motion made by Aldersperson Mask. Seconded by Aldersperson Burggraaf.

Chief Neblung said the school district will pay 90% of the SRO’s salary. (Previously, it was 75%) Aldersperson Mask how the increase was decided? Chief Neblung said he spoke with Superintendent, Dr. Hogue and presented him with some historical data from other districts in the surrounding area. Chief Neblung asked for 99%, Dr. Hogue countered with 90%.

Chief Neblung stated that this commits us to providing an SRO to the district, even with the current staffing issues, for the next 3 years.

On roll call, all yes. (Aldersperson King was absent.)

Motion passed.

Mayor Wendy asked for a motion to approve and Ordinance Amending the Number of Licenses Issued Under Chapter 111 Entitled Alcoholic Beverages.

Aldersperson VanKampen made the motion. Seconded by Aldersperson Banker.

Discussion was held on the number of licenses we have and which ones are being used.

Mayor Wendy stated that this is something that the Liquor Committee needs to meet soon to further discuss this. A meeting date was set for July 22, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. to be held at City Hall.

Mayor Wendy stated that this is for Don Julios Mexican Restaurant and Steamer Stop. This is approving a C and an A-1 License.

On roll call, all yes. (Aldersperson King was absent.)

Motion passed.

Mayor Wendy asked for a motion to approve the Estimate of Cost and MFT Resolution for the street work.

Motion made by Aldersperson Mask. Aldersperson Brondyke seconded.

Business Manager Garibay explained that this is a resolution that happens every year that has to be turned into IDOT by Eric Sikkema, estimating how much the City is going to spend in MFT funds.

On roll call, all yes. (Aldersperson King was absent,)

Motion passed.

Mayor Wendy asked for a motion to approve the start of the selected grants by Simple Grants.

Motion made by Aldersperson Burggraaf. Seconded by Aldersperson VanKampen.

It was also noted that future updates from Simple Grants will be available to all Council members at any time. However, to meet Simple Grants' deadlines for future development, it may not be feasible to wait until the next Council meeting to get approval.

On roll call, all yes. (Aldersperson King was absent.) Aley Hamling explained that the grant that was chosen is for the rebuild downtown grant. They are working with April from Simple Grants and she has worked with municipalities before. She has met with Matt, our engineer from Willett Hofmann as well as her and the Mayor. She said it is a lot of information to gather. She stated that they meet via zoom meetings because April is in Tennessee.

Mayor Wendy said they are supposed to have all the requested information to Simple Grants by July 18. They have to turn in letters of support. Mayor stated she has gotten letters of support from Duckworth, Sorensen and Spain. Mayor asked the Council members to sign a letter of support from the City Council. She added that letters of support are needed from businesses.

Mayor Wendy has received all the plans and renderings from Manreet Kalyan for the brewery. It will show the possibilities of what could be part of the downtown area. Kalyan's did respond to Mayor Wendy that moving forward with this project is not a "no" yet.

Aldersperson Wilkin asked how much the grant was for and when we will know the outcome? Mayor Wendy said it was for 2 million and the timeline is not known at this time.

Business Manager Garibay said this is a DCEO grant. (Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunities) through the State of Illinois. We were declined last time. It could take up to 6 months for us to know the outcome. Garibay feels that April from Simple Grants has worked more closely with out engineers than anyone else in the past.

Aldersperson Burggraaf asked to see a list of all the available grants. Aley Hamling will send it to her.

Aldersperson VanKampen asked about a grant to restore the bike path, Garibay said that is one of the grants that is on the list to pursue. Garibay suggested we wait until the rebuild downtown grant is completed and then go ahead with the bike path grant. Aldersperson VanKampen stated that there is no timeline of the bike path grant so that would be fine.

On roll call, all yes. (Aldersperson King was absent.)

Motion passed.

Mayor Wendy asked for a motion to approve the recommendation from the Zoning Board of Appeals to grant permission to erect a privacy fence on a corner lot.

Aldersperson Boonstra made the motion. Aldersperson Burggraaf seconded.

Business Manager Garibay said the residents requesting the appeal were going to lose their bid from their contractor because they had been waiting so long to get permission, approximately 70 days. This is a formality because after the Zoning Board of Appeals met and agreed to their request, they were told to go ahead with the project.

On roll call, all yes. (Aldersperson King was absent.)

Motion passed.

Committee of the Whole Discussions –

Dynegy sample letter was explained that will be sent out to residents. Business Manager Garibay stated that this was a good rate for the next year 3 years. This is at a rate of 7.91% per kilowatt hour.

The Letter of Support for the rebuild downtown grant was passed around for all Council members to sign.

Discussion continued on the status of new construction progress. The new Council chambers is about completely finished. Mayor hopes to have the first meeting in August there. Garibay invited all Alderpersons to stop by and take a look at the new chambers. She also stated that Eric Sikkema estimated the total of the entire project was \$220,000.00 to \$230,000.00. That was a very good price for the new addition and it was done in a very timely manner.

Going on the Committee Reports –

Public Safety – Alderperson Boonstra said the committee meeting minutes are self-explanatory. He asked about the speed control issue on north 4th Street. Chief Neblung said the equipment to collect speed data is already in place and working.

Police Dept. staffing issues were discussed and a possible hiring timeline. Chief Neblung noted the 3 options for the police dept. staffing crisis.

1. Request the Union to Open Contract Negotiations Early.
2. Immediate Salary Adjustment.
3. Wait for the Scheduled Union Negotiations.

The Council needs to make a decision on how to best handle this. Chief's Neblung's recommendation is to wait for the scheduled union negotiations.

A lengthy discussion was held on recruitment, training and the time that takes to hire a new officer. One selling point when attracting new hires is that the contract will be coming up for re-negotiations in the next 6 months. At this time, there are 8 applications on file for non-certified police officers.

Chief Neblung then brought to the attention of the Council the number of open shifts left in the schedule is about 16 to 20.

Chief asked the Council for direction on what they would like the department to do to cover these open shifts. He will not make that decision, it is up to the Council. He feels that none of these are good options. They are:

1. Leave shifts open.
2. Force current staff to cover shifts.
3. Establish an on-call pay schedule and MOU with the Union.
4. Contract with Whiteside County Sheriff's office.

A lengthy discussion was held in considering the options that are to be considered.

Alderperson Mask asked for more information on contracting with the Whiteside County Sheriff's office. Chief Neblung said that the obligation under an agreement with them would be that any non-covered shifts, they would come in and work a continuous 12-hour patrol shift at \$65.00 per hour for that 12-hour shift. These would be scheduled out in advance. Right now, there are 16 uncovered shifts until January 11, 2025. Fulton officers would have an opportunity to pick up these shifts first, if everyone says no, then they would be presented to the Sheriff's office for coverage.

Aldersperson VanKampen recommended going with paying Whiteside County to cover these shifts, rather than forcing our officers to cover them and paying the overtime. The added stress and lower moral could create a safety hazard.

Business Manager Garibay said the cost either way would be about the same, maybe a little less going with the County. She also was concerned over the safety of our officers. Mayor Wendy stated that it is unsafe to force officers to come in on their days off.

Chief Neblung explained the logistics of him working patrol hours versus being in the office.

The general consensus of the Council was to look into having Whiteside County cover these shifts. Chief will reach out to the Whiteside County Sheriff's office and other to begin implementing this plan.

Chief Neblung laid out the timeline for hiring a new officer, training and testing, etc. before having them on duty in Fulton.

Mayor Wendy stated that during exit interviews with former officers, their main reason for leaving is the pay is too low. She stated it has nothing to do with how the Department is run.

The Mayor's Report will be coming out in the summer City newsletter within the next few days.

Chief Neblung shared with the Council that there have been inquiries about Fulton having a Fourth of July fireworks display, possibly at Drives Park in the future. The City would not be involved in any cost of this, it would be a private group. Is the Council in agreement to let them go forward with the planning of a fireworks display? The Council would support this request.

Tori Wade, caretaker at Heritage Canyon gave an update on the work that is being done there. The Amish carpenters have been working on replacing the church floor, it should be done soon. Public Works will be staining the floor when complete. The next wedding is booked for August 24, so that is going to work out fine. The next project will be building the new gazebo, it is here!

Mayor Wendy asked for a motion to go into closed session for litigation purposes.

Aldersperson Mask made the motion. Aldersperson Brondyke seconded the motion.

On roll call, all in favor. (Aldersperson King was absent.)

Motion passed. Closed session at 6:51 p.m.

Motion to adjourn regular meeting.

Aldersperson Mask made the motion. Aldersperson Boonstra seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tori Wade,

City Clerk