

December 2, 2024

A regular meeting of the Wood River City Council was called to order by Mayor Tom Stalcup at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, December 2, 2024, in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 111 N. Wood River Avenue, with the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance. The Clerk called the roll and reported that the following members were:

PRESENT: David Ayres
Bill Dettmers
Jeremy Plank
Scott Tweedy
Tom Stalcup

and that a quorum was present and in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Councilman Dettmers moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 18, 2024, as printed, seconded by Councilman Tweedy, and approved by the following vote:

AYES: Ayres, Dettmers, Plank, Tweedy, Stalcup (5)

NAYS: None (0)

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Councilman Ayres moved to approve the bills submitted for payment for the period November 14, 2024, to November 26, 2024, as printed, seconded by Councilman Plank, and approved by the following vote:

AYES: Ayres, Dettmers, Plank, Tweedy, Stalcup (5)

NAYS: None (0)

CITIZEN/CITY OFFICIAL COMMENTS:

June Gibbs stated she has spent many months watching City Council Meetings and diving into public records, and she feels it is necessary to speak and ask questions. She realizes that her questions will not be answered during citizen comments but more to make people aware of the issues. She cannot stress enough that the volume is excessive and constantly changing and she may have to consider speaking at each meeting on various issues since there is a limit of five minutes to speak. Tonight, her issue is the purchase of the Brown Tire building. The purchase was approved at the October 7, 2024, City Council Meeting for \$50,000.00 of taxpayer money. While in discussion, before the vote, City Manager Steve Palen stated that the property could be contaminated, and the plans were to make it a parking lot. She asked if an EPA study has been done or if the City has already decided on the intended usage of the property without telling all the people in the community. She asked if the City could expand further on why there is a rendering for a food truck park for that property. She asked if the rendering was done with taxpayer money and what company did the rendering. She then asked if the taxpayers paid for it, why is it not at City Hall. She stated that she has done a government capital project in the past and she is quite familiar with the process. She stated that the usual process is to bring in the firm at a Council Meeting to discuss his or her services and then a meeting is held with the firm to discuss what the City is looking for in the project. Then, the firm would design and present the rendering in a public meeting. To date, she has not seen any of that. This does not happen overnight. The process takes time yet there is a rendering at the Wood River Business Alliance Office. She stated that because no one on the Council is transparent, she can only assume or ask questions. The possibility is that the Business Alliance paid for this and is merely just wishing for this park, but being that it is government property, she tends to believe that the City is involved in this project and refuses to let the people know prior to a committed vote at a City Council Meeting. She then stated that the City should let all the people know as their money is involved, not just the selective few that the City chooses to tell. Concerns are about the excessive parks that the City is bringing downtown that will not bring revenue but more expense to construct and maintain. All the while revitalization with businesses has been very limited in the last four years. People need to understand the sudden shift from revitalization of buildings to parks comes with a reason. Many people do not realize that the main developer has packed up and left. She stated that is the reason for the additional property that is up for sale downtown. The illusion of revitalization must continue and in the last couple months, it has been all about parks, dog park, bike path, pocket park, and now a food truck park. All of these cost hundreds of thousands of dollars which generates no revenue. Lastly, as the City has a history of giving property away, she asked if the City intends to do the same with this property after spending \$50,000.00 in taxpayer money to purchase the property. If so, she asked if the City already has

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someone in mind to give it to. Hopefully, others in the community will start to ask questions and, in the meantime, the residents will present more to the people at City Council Meetings.

Pastor Dave Landry stated that he has not been available to come to the meetings recently, but he has been watching them online and he would like to do something tonight that he feels is not being done enough. He thanked Director of Parks and Recreation, Pat Minogue, and Chief of Police, Brad Wells, for initiating a concern over the parks and some of the violence that is going on with the community's teenagers. He stated that he saw that there was some negativity about what the City wanted to do about the violence, and after he reviewed the proposal, he realized that it was a very positive gesture on the City's part, and he has witnessed kids getting picked on many times with no one there to protect them and he wants to acknowledge and thank Director Minogue and Chief Wells. He also thanked the City Council for approving the ordinance. He then gave a big shout out to Kristen Burns as she has done so much for the community, and she is one of those that have been on a hit list, and he does not understand why. He stated that she gives up so much time for the City and does so many things for the City. For those that wanted to venture out into the cold, Ms. Burns and the Wood River Business Alliance held an event last Friday and Pastor Landry thanked her and the committee for the things they are doing because he knows that there is a lot of hostility that goes out to certain people that are in certain positions and they are always trying to knock them down and tear them apart. Pastor Landry then thanked Director Minogue and his staff for making the Recreation Center so successful. He stated that he ventures out to the Recreation Center three times a week and he is amazed at how busy the Recreation Center stays. He then stated that a lot of people said that no one would utilize the Recreation Center and people are utilizing it. People also said that no one would sponsor it, and they are. He is excited about it and thanked God that the critics were wrong and at some point, he hopes that the critics can muster up enough to apologize for some of their actions against the Recreation Center. He also thanked Director Minogue and his great crew of workers for keeping the parks up to par, especially 14th Street Park, which was not taken care of in the past as well as he thought it could have been. The sidewalks are being kept clean, the grass is being cut, and there is a water fountain out there now for the kids to use and for those who use the pickleball and basketball courts. There is also a bathroom that is available. People from his neighborhood asked him to speak about the lawn mowing crews at the park because when they come out in the fall to mow it really helps the residents with fewer leaves coming into their yards. He appreciates how well kept the park is and the job that Director Minogue and his crew are doing. He also thanked the Director of Public Services, Michael Velloff for his involvement in the covering of the blacktop for the basketball court at 14th Street. Pastor Landry stated that he talked to City Manager Steve Palen and Mayor Stalcup regarding the TIF agreement that was discussed at a recent Council Meeting and he believes that if a Pastor with a seminary degree can understand the agreement, he believes that members of the Council should be able to talk to the City Manager and the Mayor and get an understanding of how TIF works. He does not believe that the City is doing anything wrong according to the terms of the TIF agreement. The City is doing everything right and he thanked City officials for it. He stated that when someone says they are concerned about the money being spent in the City, he laughs when he thinks about who is saying that after all the money that they cost the City.

Audrey Dettmers read Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; fools despise wisdom and instruction." She stated that she read that bible verse because the previous speaker talked about the parks, and children should be free to go to parks just like adults. People should be fearing the Lord rather than man. She then stated that she spoke a month ago and made the City Council aware of some information that she had gathered while researching the TIF and the downtown area. The information that she shared was that Chris Slusser, the former Treasurer of Madison County, City Manager Steve Palen, and Police Chief Brad Wells sent referral letters to Greenville, Illinois for Tim O'Donnell, a developer for Wood River. City Manager Steve Palen had his referral letter on City letterhead. She asked the City Council if that was an official act and does City Manager Steve Palen have that in his job description. Trump versus the United States this year in 2024, the Supreme Court said that unofficial acts have no immunity. She stated that it is time for the City to either study law or understand very clearly where the lines are between public positions and private friendships.

City Manager Steve Palen asked Trisha Shrewsberry from CJ Schlosser & Company LLC to give a brief presentation of the audit report for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. The audit report is available for public inspection at the City Clerk's Office at City Hall.

Councilman Plank stated that it is nice to see that the investments did better this year than the prior year, as well as the sales and use tax. He also stated that it is nice to be able to see previous year

comparisons of sales and use tax to see how far the City has come as they are also indicative of how residents are doing.

Councilman Dettmers stated that the City received \$7 million dollars in revenue for the State Street Sewer Separation Project and asked what the total cost will be for the project.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that once all of the phases are completed, the total cost of the project will be 21 million dollars. The bid for the phase that is currently under construction was a little over 9 million dollars.

Councilman Dettmers stated that he loves pensions. He then stated that he believes the State has a required interest assumption on the IMRF fund of 7.25 percent that he does not believe has been a reasonable expectation for many years. With the 7.25 percent assumption the unfunded liability is approximately 1.4 million dollars while with a 6.25 percent assumption the liability is about 4 million dollars which is closer to his expectation.

Regarding police and fire pensions, Councilman Dettmers stated he is concerned about the fire pension liability at 6.32 percent interest assumption. He understands that in the past the City has contributed an additional two percent over the statutory minimum for each pension and he hopes the City is able to continue that trend. Overall, he stated the fire and police pension funds had good years. The police pension fund interest assumption is lower at 5.97 percent with a liability of almost 13 million dollars. He stated he is uncomfortable with that and hopes the City can continue to whittle away at those liabilities.

Mayor Stalcup asked Kristen Burns to give a recap of the Holiday Traditions Night Market that was held on Friday, November 29, 2024, in Downtown Wood River. Ms. Burns thanked the community for their support. This year the event was expanded to Ferguson Avenue and First Street and despite the cold, there was a very good turnout. Through social media analytics and vendor sales, it was estimated that over 1,300 people attended the event and through check-ins on the Facebook page, 43 percent of the check-ins were from out of town. There were 70 vendors registered but the frigid temperatures kept some of them away, but there were still over 45 vendors that participated. A heated tent was added this year with multiple vendors set up in the tent and those vendors did fantastic. Some of the local vendors were interested in looking at some brick-and-mortar spaces. Ms. Burns received emails over the weekend asking about different things that are going on downtown, which is exactly what events like the Holiday Traditions Night Market are for, to show off what the City of Wood River has to offer. Axe throwing, a petting zoo, and pony rides were also added this year. She thanked all of the volunteers for setting up, the volunteers that painted windows downtown, and the group of students from EAWRCHS that stepped up and helped out. She also thanked the high school for all of their help and support. She also stated that this year the Business Alliance reached out to a lot of other businesses in Wood River, including High Point Residence, America's Best, and Wood River Chiropractic who set up vendor booths and talked to people and helped with a lot of different things. First Christian Church of Wood River did the s'mores. She then stated that the Business Alliance was really happy to have all of the support and everyone coming together to put on such a great event. She thanked the Library for their participation, the Fire Department and Fire Chief Wade Stahlhut for bringing Santa in on the fire truck, and the Public Services and Parks and Recreation Departments for all of their hard work with assisting with setting up the event. She stated that events like these are hard work, and they take a lot of time and support. There was a lot of support from the community, small businesses, and City officials. She thanked the sponsors, First Mid Bank & Trust, Werts Welding, Pete's Parlor, Mark Smith Shelter Insurance, Cleary Shoes, Budget Signs, Wood River Electronics, and Federico Kia. She also thanked Councilman Tweedy, Councilman Plank, Mayor Stalcup, City Manager Steve Palen, Chief Stahlhut, Deputy Chief Nate Kamp, and Chief Wells for coming to the event and for their support.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that the Councilmembers received a memorandum from Finance Director Karen Weber regarding the City of Wood River's TIF District. He thanked Director Weber for all her work preparing the information and he commended Director Weber and Chief Wells for being on the TIF Committee and he appreciates their hard work and dedication.

Mayor Stalcup stated that on a sad note, long time City employee Jim Bob DeWerff passed away on Tuesday, November 19, 2024. Jim Bob worked as a laborer for the City of Wood River for 38 years. He was an outstanding athlete at Wood River High School and was married to his wife, Connie, for 48 years. He stated that the City employee's hearts go out to Connie and their family.

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Councilman Dettmers stated that in regard to TIF, his approach is to try and develop a win-win situation for the City. He had a discussion with the City Attorney, and he asked if there was a way for the City to do a claw back or put a claw back provision in the TIF agreements in case the building was sold. The City Attorney did some research, and he came back and said no, there is no way to do that. Councilman Dettmers explained the TIF process for members of the community who might not know how the process works. He stated that TIF is where the City creates a district where the value of the amount of taxes is frozen that the taxing districts are going to receive and any appreciation from that point on goes into a fund that the City has control over. Ordinarily, if the City did not have this fund, money would be paid to the school district, the library, and other taxing districts. So, even though there might be just a small incremental increase, the amount of tax revenues that they receive due to the adjustments and the assessed values and things of that nature, they are no longer getting that money, so it puts pressure on these taxing districts to find other ways of generating revenues. For example, the high school had to do what is called a backdoor bond issue to come up with funds to make improvements. He is not saying that if the City had not created the TIF District the situation with the school would have been resolved but it would have been a situation that could have perhaps provided some relief. Secondly, the Library is now wanting to do an additional assessment. The TIF District has been around for five years, and the library is very frugal in how it handles its expenditures, but it has not had an increase from the downtown area in its revenues because of the TIF District. The way the TIF District works is that at the end of the TIF variant, any money that is remaining in the TIF fund has to be returned to the taxing districts that were denied these revenues over the years. When Councilman Dettmers looks at the TIF agreements he is looking for a situation where the City is going to reward these contractors and developers for being willing to come in and invest into the community but at the same time, he wants to have an eye to make sure the City is not taking money out that might be able to be returned to the taxing districts sometime in the future. The way that it has been done in the past was there were provisions put into the TIF agreements that said if there were no employees or the building was vacant, the applicant was not going to get any money from the TIF District and that is happening right now with where C&B Boiled Bagels used to be. The TIF District is no longer making payments to that developer because that building is vacant. Now, there is the possibility that if the owner of the property is able to sell the building, the City might be able to renegotiate with the new owner. If the City did not have that provision in the agreement, the City would still be obligated to pay all the money under the TIF agreement to that developer who is no longer helping the City develop downtown. Councilman Dettmers then stated that this has been his approach to how he is going to approve TIF agreements. That is the driving force behind his decisions to make sure that if someone is going to come in and get a lot of money over a period of time, a quarter of a million dollars is a lot of money to him, he thinks that there needs to be a provision in the agreement and the provision needs to be properly administered to protect the taxing districts so that the City is not making payments to developers and the money is going out when they sell the building. That is not helping the City and Councilman Dettmers is going to make sure he speaks up every time a TIF agreement is brought forward that does not have a provision in the agreement that says if the building is vacant or if there is a requirement to have an employee or someone in the building then he is going to object to it.

Secondly, Councilman Dettmers stated that in the City's TIF Guidelines, there are certain requirements that the developers are obligated to perform before the application is supposed to be brought to the City Council. For example, all taxes have to be paid, all fees have to be paid, utility bills have to be paid, permits, and other debts owed to the City by the applicant or the builder have to be taken care of. If the developer does not currently own the building, a copy of the contract is supposed to be provided to the City Council for them to review. In addition to that, there should be a credit report run on each of the applicants. He stated that after the September 16, 2024, Council Meeting, the Council added a provision to the agreement that was approved at that meeting and he believes that it was supposed to be included in the TIF Guidelines, but he has not seen the ordinance changing the TIF Guidelines yet. The agreement that was approved at the September 16, 2024, Council Meeting was one where there had to be proof that the developer or the person who submitted the TIF application is authorized to do business in the State of Illinois. He has not seen and ordinance to change the TIF Guidelines yet, so he is hopeful that the Council is going to be able to vote on it in the near future.

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RESOLUTION NO. 2099: RESOLUTION APPROVING AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF WOOD RIVER AND MADISON COUNTY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW SERVICES RELATED TO THE 9TH STREET DETENTION POND PROJECT:

Councilman Plank moved to approve a resolution approving an Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Wood River and Madison County for environmental review services related to the 9th Street Detention Pond Project, as submitted by the Director of Public Services, seconded by Councilman Tweedy

Councilman Dettmers stated that he was surprised to see that HUD is involved with this and asked if this is to authorize the County to act in place of HUD.

City Manager Steve Palen explained that the County will do an environmental review for the City with the \$850,000.00 that the City is receiving from Representative Nikki Budzinski's Office for the 9th Street Detention Pond Project. The County is an authorized agent for the applications and the environmental reviews. It was confirmed that the County will do these services for the City.

The resolution was approved by the following vote:

AYES: Ayres, Dettmers, Plank, Tweedy, Stalcup (5)

NAYS: None (0)

RESOLUTION NO. 2100: RESOLUTION DECLARING THE STRUCTURE(S) LOCATED AT PARCEL ID 19-2-08-21-16-404-025, COMMONLY KNOWN AS 61 ECKHARD AVENUE, WOOD RIVER, ILLINOIS 62095, UNSAFE AND A PUBLIC NUISANCE AND AUTHORIZING THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY TO PROCEED WITH LEGAL ACTION:

Councilman Tweedy moved to approve a resolution declaring the structure(s) located at Parcel ID 19-2-08-21-16-404-025, commonly known as 61 Eckhard avenue, Wood River, Illinois 62095, unsafe and a public nuisance and authorizing the Prosecuting Attorney to proceed with legal action, as submitted by the Building and Zoning Administrator, seconded by Councilman Ayres

Councilman Dettmers stated that he is in favor of enforcing all of the City's ordinances and he assumes that there has been an extensive discussion with this property owner. He stated that he hates taking property and he believes that the intention behind this resolution is to condemn the property. He understands that the City has to do this, but he wants to make sure that this is the City's last resort and that the City has exhausted every possible opportunity to try to get the issues with this property resolved.

Mayor Stalcup stated that the process takes months to get to this point. The Building and Zoning Department has given the owner of the property plenty of time to correct the nuisance property and this is the last resort.

The resolution was approved by the following vote:

AYES: Ayres, Dettmers, Plank, Tweedy, Stalcup (5)

NAYS: None (0)

APPROVED: RECEIPT OF THE 2023-2024 AUDIT REPORT AS PREPARED BY C.J. SCHLOSSER & COMPANY LLC:

Councilman Ayres moved to approve receipt of the 2023-2024 Audit Report as prepared by C.J. Schlosser & Company LLC, as submitted by the Finance Director, seconded by Councilman Dettmers, and approved by the following vote:

AYES: Ayres, Dettmers, Plank, Tweedy, Stalcup (5)

NAYS: None (0)

DENIED: REQUEST TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY ATTORNEY TO DRAFT A POLICY REGARDING CITY EMPLOYEES WRITING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:

Councilman Dettmers moved to approve a request to authorize the City Attorney to draft a policy regarding City employees writing letters of recommendation, seconded by Councilman Ayres

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Councilman Dettmers stated that there was a discussion about this a meeting or two ago and he had a discussion with the City Attorney regarding this request. He wants to make sure that it is clear that this is not an attempt to hinder anyone from providing a letter of recommendation. He stated it merely is hopeful that the City Council can provide some guidance to the employees so that the City is protected and employees know how to approach writing letters of recommendation. There is no malice, or anything intended here, it is just to provide guidance and help employees determine the proper way of making letters of recommendation.

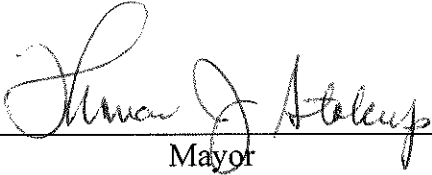
The request was denied by the following vote:

AYES: Ayres, Dettmers (2)
NAYS: Plank, Tweedy, Stalcup (3)

OLD BUSINESS: NONE

NEW BUSINESS: NONE

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.



Mayor



City Clerk