

A regular meeting of the Wood River City Council was called to order by Mayor Tom Stalcup at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, January 6, 2025, 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 Tweedy moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of December 16, 2024, as printed, seconded by Councilman Ayres, and approved by the following vote:

AYES: Ayres, Dettmers, Plank, Tweedy, Stalcup (5)  
NAYS: None (0)

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Councilman Dettmers moved to approve the bills submitted for payment for the period December 12, 2024, to December 31, 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 that this is her third meeting to ask questions. At the last meeting, she titled it "Friends, Friends of Friends, and Political Friends" and she will be talking more on this subject tonight. She then stated that for people who are not familiar with the property located at 876 State Street, it is a church property that the City obtained that went out for bid on December 13, 2023, and the bid closed on December 18, 2023. Once again, the bid for \$1.00 was awarded to WGO Investments LLC, also known as Tim O'Donnell. Per the proposal, Mr. O'Donnell submitted a rendering for the church to be converted to a four-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath house. Per the contract between the City and Tim O'Donnell, otherwise known as WGO Investments LLC, Mr. O'Donnell would get three years to complete the renovation of the church and if not done as specified, the contract states that the property shall be returned to the seller which is the City. Oddly, it was noted in the records that WGO Investments LLC was not in good standing with the Illinois Secretary of State at the time of closing and is still not in good standing today. In four short months, the property was given to Rachel's Coffee and not returned to the City. The legal binding contract required the property to be given back to the City and the City made no attempt to claw the property back that she could see from the public records she received from the City and the question is why. She then stated that besides the fact that Rachel's Coffee has not paid their taxes, Jonas Cathey, the owner of Rachel's Coffee, is the secretary of the Wood River Economic Development Group doing business as Wood River Business Alliance where Tim O'Donnell is president. She then stated that maybe at this point, Councilman Plank or Councilman Tweedy can explain to the citizens in this community since they sit on the Business Alliance Advisory Board, why this property was not clawed back. She then asked Councilman Plank and Councilman Tweedy if they can tell the people on what date they started on the Business Alliance Advisory Board, and she asked if there is a conflict of interest. As a reminder, Councilman Plank, Mayor Stalcup, and Tim O'Donnell hosted the fundraiser for Mr. Slusser's political campaign. Also, the City is in a contract for \$75,000.00 of taxpayer money over three years with the Wood River Business Alliance. Plus, to date, Mr. O'Donnell has not paid his taxes. Ms. Gibbs believes that everyone can agree that the contract is a legal binding contract with WGO Investments LLC, and someone in this City is responsible. She asked if it would be the responsibility of the City Manager or the responsibility of all of the City Officials. She reminded all of the City Officials that they work for the citizens in this community, and she asked if their interests are for the so-called developers and their friends, or friends of City Officials, or political friends. She then stated that the City Officials have remained silent and have not gone into open discussion to let the people know. Being that this is now involving taxpayer property and what appears to be a breach of contract with the City not protecting

January 6, 2025

the interests of the citizens, she will be submitting to the State Attorney General's Office for their review.

Councilman Dettmers asked if the City has a contract with WGO Investments LLC.

City Manager Steve Palen replied in the affirmative.

Councilman Dettmers asked if there is a restriction in the contract for transferring of the property.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that they were allowed to transfer the property upon approval.

Councilman Dettmers stated that he does not recall the approval of a transfer coming before Council for a vote.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that WGO Investments LLC brought the transfer request to himself and Chief Wells. At that time, a discussion took place with Mr. Cathey regarding what the property was to be used for, and it was decided that Tim O'Donnell could transfer the property to Mr. Cathey.

Councilman Dettmers asked who has the authority to approve the transfer.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that he and Chief Wells approved the transfer.

Councilman Dettmers asked if City Manager Steve Palen has the authority to approve transfers on behalf of the City.

City Manager Steve Palen stated he believes he does.

Councilman Dettmers asked if it was in the contract.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that he is not sure if it is specifically worded that way in the contract.

Councilman Dettmers stated that he would like to ask the City Attorney to review the contract, and he would like to have a copy of the contract.

Audrey Dettmers stated that she wanted to speak about the item under Old Business on the agenda tonight. She stated that she is a constitutionalist who studies constitutional law, which makes identifying matters not pursuant to the Constitution evident. Regarding property potentially affected by this ordinance, she argued that while the Illinois legislative body may have historically viewed all land as borrowed rather than private, this was never the agreement. When the Nation was founded, the only authority preceding the U.S. Constitution was the people, who are sovereign over it. She referenced a recent statement by Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch supporting this perspective. She further explained that discussions about the law must recognize that people are private and independent of the Constitution. Before amendments, it was understood that individuals inherently had private rights. James Madison included specific rights in the amendments, such as bearing arms, free speech, and due process of law, but these were not the only rights. She emphasized that the Fourth Amendment provides the right to privacy in one's property by prohibiting unreasonable searches and seizures, inherently affirming the privacy of homes. She cautioned that allowing arbitrary control over property risks legal challenges in an Article III Court, where individuals can sue both the City and its officials personally under common law for violating their oath to uphold the Constitution. She concluded by stating that her comments were intended as advice.

Councilman Plank highlighted the achievements of Mickey Sabolo and his staff at Belk Park Golf Course. Councilman Plank stated that the golf course is a jewel of Wood River. The golf course had the highest annual revenue in three decades which is a testament to the course's popularity and quality. Belk Park received the "Places to Play-4 Star Award" by *Golf Digest*, an award that has been received by the course several years in a row. He praised Belk Park as one of the premier golf destinations in both the Metro-East and Illinois, citing numerous accomplishments regarding the course's attendance, revenue, and capital improvements. Councilman Plank is looking forward to many more successful years of growth for the course.

January 6, 2025

Councilman Ayres stated that at the last meeting the vacant structure ordinance was tabled, and he requested that a discussion take place before the ordinance was reintroduced to the Council. Going forward, he requested that tabled items be discussed between the City Manager and interested parties before being added back to the agenda.

Councilman Dettmers agreed with Councilman Ayres and expressed his surprise that the ordinance was on the agenda for tonight's meeting with no discussion occurring in the interim between the last Council Meeting. He stated a sour taste is left in his mouth when an item is tabled and a Councilmember requests further discussion about an issue, but no discussion occurs before the item is added back to the agenda. He is hopeful that this will not happen again and expressed that this is not the right way to do business.

Councilman Dettmers then thanked the Director of Public Services Michael Velloff and his employees for their commendable job on clearing the streets after the snowfall over the weekend.

Councilman Tweedy questioned Councilman Dettmers on his preferred setting for discussions concerning items such as the tabled items.

Councilman Dettmers responded that he would prefer the City Manager to invite him to a meeting and expressed his concerns with the vacant structure ordinance.

Discussion ensued regarding the entire Council meeting outside of an open meeting and how it would be a violation of the Open Meetings Act. It was understood that a Special Meeting would have to be held in order to do that. Councilman Dettmers explained that he and Councilman Ayres wanted to meet with the City Manager.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that a meeting was scheduled for Monday, January 6, 2025, in the morning but with the snowfall, City Hall was closed, and the meeting was cancelled. City Manager Steve Palen stated that Councilman Ayres requested the meeting to be held Monday, January 6, 2025.

Discussion ensued regarding tabled items being put back on the agenda for the following meeting.

City Manager Steve Palen explained that the ordinance on the agenda tonight is strictly language cleanup as the ordinance is already in the City Code of Ordinances that the current councilmembers voted to approve back in March 2024.

Councilman Dettmers stated that he would like to revisit the ordinance and that was going to be a part of the discussion.

Mayor Stalcup praised the Public Services Department for their efforts clearing the snow.

Further discussion ensued regarding the process of a tabled item and when the discussion should take place to discuss the tabled item and whether or not the same item can be tabled again.

Councilman Plank stated that this ordinance is already on the books and the amended ordinance that is on the agenda tonight simply cleans up some of the language. He then stated that a discussion can still take place and upon further review of the City Attorneys, the Council can get some insight from the City Attorneys and clean up the ordinance for the next meeting.

Mayor Stalcup stated that the ordinance can be tabled again tonight, and a discussion can take place before it is put back on an agenda.

Councilman Plank stated that he would prefer to remove the ordinance from the table tonight, have a discussion about how the case that was presented to Council applies upon review, and approve the amendment to the ordinance since the language is currently inconsistent.

City Manager Steve Palen explained that the ordinance took effect January 1, 2025, so the language needs to be consistent in order to start the process.

January 6, 2025

RESOLUTION NO. 2104: EXECUTING A SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF WOOD RIVER AND PLUMBERS & PIPEFITTERS U.A. LOCAL #553 FOR MARKETING IN SUPPORT OF THE WOOD RIVER RECREATION CENTER:

Councilman Ayres moved to approve a resolution executing a Sponsorship Agreement between the City of Wood River and Plumbers & Pipefitters U.A. Local #553 for marketing in support of the Wood River Recreation Center, as submitted by the Director of Parks and Recreation, seconded by Councilman Tweedy, and approved by the following vote:

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

NAYS: None (0)

APPROVED: RECOMMENDATION TO ACCEPT THE BID FROM STUTZ EXCAVATING, INC., IN THE AMOUNT OF \$73,321.00 FOR CONCRETE WORK FOR THE DOWNTOWN DOG PARK:

Councilman Plank moved to approve a recommendation to accept the bid from Stutz Excavating, Inc., in the amount of \$73,321.00 for concrete work for the Downtown Dog Park, as submitted by the Director of Public Services, seconded by Councilman Tweedy

Councilman Dettmers stated that he has been torn on whether or not to support the Downtown Dog Park; however, he is going to vote yes on accepting the bid tonight, but he is not sure that this is the right thing for the City. He then stated that he had a resident contact him that stated she takes her dog to the dog park in Edwardsville regularly and is really looking forward to the Downtown Dog Park and that resident swayed his decision to vote yes on this item. He thanked the resident for her communication.

Councilman Ayres asked what department is going to maintain the dog park.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that the Parks and Recreation Department will maintain the dog park.

Councilman Ayres asked how the dog park will be maintained.

City Manager Steve Palen explained that the citizens visiting the dog park should clean up after their dogs and if they do not, the Parks and Recreation Department will maintain the dog park as needed.

The Parks and Recreation Department currently mows the lot and will continue to do so.

Councilman Ayres expressed his concern about the smell if the dog park is not well maintained.

The recommendation was approved by the following vote:

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

NAYS: None (0)

APPROVED: SETTING THE ANNUAL PUBLIC HEARING ON THE CITY'S ADA TRANSITION PLAN FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2025, AT 7:00 P.M., BEFORE THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED CITY COUNCIL MEETING:

Councilman Plank moved to approve setting the annual Public Hearing on the City's ADA Transition Plan for Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. before the regularly scheduled City Council Meeting, seconded by Councilman Tweedy, and approved by the following vote:

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

NAYS: None (0)

APPROVED: CHANGE MEETING DATE DUE TO MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. HOLIDAY:

Councilman Dettmers moved to approve changing the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting to Tuesday, January 21, 2025, due to the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, seconded by Councilman Ayres, and approved by the following vote:

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

NAYS: None (0)

CLOSED SESSION:

Councilman Plank moved for approval of a recess to hold an executive closed session to discuss matters pertaining to approval of certain executive closed session minutes (5ILCS 120/2 (c)(21)), seconded by Councilman Tweedy

Councilman Dettmers requested that the Council move across the hall to hold the closed session.

The closed session was approved by the following vote:

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

NAYS: None (0)

The Council recessed at 7:25 p.m. and reconvened at 7:35 p.m.

Councilman Tweedy made a motion to go back into open session, seconded by Councilman Ayres, and the motion was approved by the following vote:

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

NAYS: None (0)

City Attorney Kathryn Warren explained that Council went into executive closed session tonight to discuss matters related to what the Council discussed at the last meeting in executive closed session regarding statutory required release of closed session minutes from prior executive closed sessions. She then explained that at the last meeting it was decided to release certain executive closed session meeting minutes; however, the Council had to go back into executive closed session tonight to further discuss the closed session meeting minutes from November 7, 2022. Upon further review since the last Council Meeting, it was determined that there were certain portions of the meeting minutes from that closed session that under the statute cannot be released due to a confidentiality agreement that is within the portion of the settlement agreement related to litigation. She further explained that only a portion of the executive closed session meeting minutes from November 7, 2022, will be released at this time.

OLD BUSINESS:

APPROVAL TO REMOVE OFF THE TABLE THE APPROVAL OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CITY CODE 90-7, TITLE XV: LAND USAGE, AMENDING CHAPTER 159: VACANT STRUCTURE REGISTRATION:

Councilman Plank moved to remove off the table the approval of an ordinance amending City Code 90-7, Title XV: Land Usage, amending Chapter 159: Vacant Structure Ordinance, seconded by Councilman Tweedy, and approved by the following vote:

AYES: Plank, Tweedy, Stalcup (3)

NAYS: Ayres, Dettmers (2)

ORDINANCE NO. 25-1: AMENDING CITY CODE 90-7, TITLE XV: LAND USAGE, AMENDING CHAPTER 159: VACANT STRUCTURE REGISTRATION:

Councilman Plank moved to approve an ordinance amending City Code 90-7, Title XV: Land Usage, Amending Chapter 159: Vacant Structure Registration, seconded by Councilman Tweedy

Councilman Dettmers stated that with this item being removed from the table, the Council will be voting to pass the ordinance that was tabled at the last meeting. He then stated that it was tabled at the last meeting to give the Council an opportunity to discuss the ordinance, and the Council has not had an opportunity to discuss it to try and revise the language of the proposed ordinance.

Councilman Dettmers motioned to table an ordinance amending City Code 90-7, Title XV: Land Usage, amending Chapter 159: Vacant Structure Registration, seconded by Councilman Ayres, and the motion to table was denied by the following vote:

AYES: Ayres, Dettmers (2)

NAYS: Plank, Tweedy, Stalcup (3)

January 6, 2025

The ordinance was approved by the following vote:

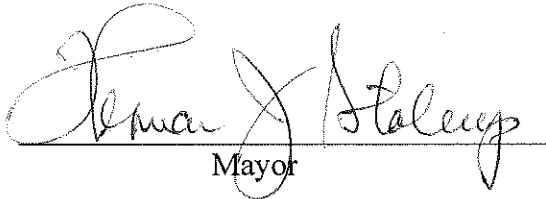
AYES: Plank, Tweedy, Stalcup (3)

NAYS: Ayres, Dettmers (2)

NEW BUSINESS:

Councilman Plank and Director of Parks and Recreation Pat Minogue announced the airing of Deal or No Deal Island featuring Parks and Recreation Supervisor, Dickson Wong. The show airs Tuesday, January 7, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. on NBC.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk