

CITY COUNCIL

February 18, 2025

The February 18, 2025 City Council meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers by Kate Niederkohr, President. A moment of silence was observed followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. City Council members present were Kenneth Wessler, Tom Karcher, Aaron Korte, Julia Lemire, Scott Moore, Kate Niederkohr, and John Walker.

Others present included: Kyle McColly, Mayor; Ben Buckland, Law Director; Bob Snively, Palmer Energy; Paul Berger; Brian Hemminger, Daily Chief Union; and Sarah Bennett, Clerk.

The minutes of the February 3, 2025 City Council meeting, having been mailed to each City Council member, were approved as received.

The minutes of the February 3, 2025 Safety Committee meeting, having been mailed to each City Council member, were reviewed.

The minutes of the February 3, 2025 Service Committee meeting, having been mailed to each City Council member, were reviewed.

The minutes of the February 3, 2025 Public Hearing (6:10 p.m.), having been mailed to each City Council member, were reviewed.

The minutes of the February 3, 2025 Public Hearing (6:20 p.m.), having been mailed to each City Council member, were reviewed.

The minutes of the February 3, 2025 Planning Commission meeting, having been mailed to each City Council member, were reviewed.

The minutes of the February 10, 2025 Civil Service Commission meeting, having been mailed to each City Council member, were reviewed.

The minutes of the February 10, 2025 Park Board meeting, having been mailed to each City Council member, were reviewed.

The minutes of the February 10, 2025 Downtown Committee meeting, having been mailed to each City Council member, were reviewed.

The minutes of the February 12, 2025 Planning Commission meeting, having been mailed to each City Council member, were reviewed.

The minutes of the February 13, 2025 special Safety Committee meeting, having been mailed to each City Council member, were reviewed.

Mr. Bob Snively, Palmer Energy, again addressed City Council and provided an update on two options for the City's nature gas aggregation program. Mr. Snively indicated that Columbia Gas has requested a 110% increase of its utility adder, due to work performed on its gas pipeline, and the request has not been approved by the federal government yet and typically the requested increase gets negotiated down for a compromise; but it is unknown when the federal government will review the requested increase and it could be after the increase is already in place. Mr. Snively stated that due to uncertainty a provider has created a hybrid offer based on the 110% adder increase that offers a refund only to customers participating in the aggregation program if the federal government negotiates a cheaper compromise during the first twelve months. There would also be a renegotiated second twelve months included. The second option locks in a better adder than the current request from Columbia Gas with nothing additional. Mr. Snively noted that Palmer Energy recommends the City accept the hybrid offer. Mr. Buckland will check to make sure Mayor McColly still has the authority to sign the agreement.

A motion was made by Mr. Korte, seconded by Mr. Karcher, to place Ordinance No. 5-14 entitled, “AN ORDINANCE TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF MEMBRANES FOR THE WATER TREATMENT PLANT.”, on its first reading by title only. Upon Roll Call, all members voted Yes; the President declared the motion carried. The Clerk read Ordinance No. 5-14 for the first time by title only.

A motion was made by Mr. Karcher, seconded by Mrs. Lemire, to place Ordinance No. 6-14 entitled, “AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF A JOHN DEERE 333 P-TIER COMPACT TRACK LOADER AND ACCESSORIES THROUGH THE STATE PURCHASING PROGRAM.”, on its first reading by title only. Considerable discussion was held regarding this purchase. Mr. Korte indicated that this equipment is not a replacement, it is in addition to the existing fleet, and while it would be nice to have it is not the right time to pursue this purchase. City Council members agreed that more information is needed. A motion was made by Mr. Karcher, seconded by Mrs. Lemire, to table this matter at this time. Upon Voice Vote, all members voted Yes. The President declared the motion carried.

Mr. Karcher inquired about the status of union negotiations with the labor pool employees and the police dispatchers. Mr. Buckland indicated that negotiations with both entities are ongoing.

Mrs. Lemire expressed the importance of City Council members to reiterate to citizens the benefits of increasing the City’s income tax collections by an additional ½%, to be voted on in the May primary election, as a need to reinvest in our community’s future.

Mayor McColly reported that he continues to work with Omnifiber in effort to provide internet access to all City office/business buildings.

Mayor McColly also reported that there are ongoing meetings with the Louis Dreyfus Company to work on agreements for the Valencia soybean processing facility to be located to the west of the City in Salem Township. Mr. Korte, in effort to address rumors throughout the community, inquired with Mayor McColly as to if the City will be providing water to the Valencia facility and Mayor McColly responded that the City will be providing water to the Valencia facility. Mr. Korte also inquired with Mayor McColly as to if any of the recent water rate increases have anything to do with the Valencia facility being located here, and Mayor McColly stated that the recent water rate increases have nothing to do with Valencia locating here.

It was noted that a corrected finance report for December 2024 and a finance report for January 2025 were received by the members of City Council.

There being no further business, the President declared the meeting adjourned.

Sarah J. Bennett, Clerk

Kate Niederkohr, President