

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE ZION CITY COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2024, AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 2828 SHERIDAN ROAD, ZION, ILLINOIS**

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Mayor McKinney called the meeting to order.

On call of the roll the following answered present: Commissioners Fischer, Holmes, McDowell, Frierson and Mayor McKinney. A quorum was present.

Also present: Police Chief Eric Barden, Accounts & Finance Director Kris Conway, City Administrator David Knabel and City Attorney Megan Lamb. Fire/Rescue Chief Justin Stried, Public Works Director Ray Roberts and Building & Zoning Director Richard Ianson were absent.

Mr. Bremner led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**AGENDA CHANGES**

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Holmes to accept the City Council meeting agenda presented.

The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS**

Willie Simpson, Realtor, shared his support of the proposed project at Shepherd's Crossing. He spoke with people in the community and they would like to see the community finished and fully developed. It will add more families to the area which will cater to local businesses and create more property taxes for the City. Additionally, it will improve property values as new construction tends to increase values. He has been a Real Estate Broker for 30 years in Lake County and is a former resident.

Kathy Champine, Zion, spoke on the proposed development at Shepherd's Crossing. She noted that the proposed company slated to do the development is worth \$5.5 billion and Zion's EAV is \$400 million. She feels they can afford the impact fees and does not think they need to be reduced. Additionally, she voiced her concerns regarding the pricing and size of the homes.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Holmes that the Minutes be approved as follows:

- (a) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** a Regular Meeting held on February 6, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.; approval but not release of Closed Session Minutes of a Meeting held on February 6, 2024 at 8:17 p.m.

The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried.

It was moved by Commissioner Fischer, seconded by Commissioner McDowell that the Bills be approved as follows:

- (b) **BILLS:** Vouchers 145222 through 145383 drawn on Huntington National Bank, N.A. Total: \$1,167,277.17.

The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried.

**ORDINANCE/AMENDING SECTION 2-5/ZION MUNICIPAL CODE**

Administrator Knabel stated they currently have a bid requirement of \$10,000 in the Code which followed the prior State Statute requirement. This amount has not been increased in over 20 years. The State has changed the threshold to \$25,000. With growing inflation and normal equipment and supplies ever increasing up over \$10,000 this will help to not hinder everyday operations. Department Heads will still get the necessary quotes and go to bid once amounts rise above the \$25,000 threshold. He recommends raising the bid requirement limit from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

It was moved by Commissioner Holmes, seconded by Commissioner Fischer that an Ordinance (24-O-7) be passed amending Section 2-5 of the Zion Municipal Code regarding purchases for the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

**SURPLUS PROPERTY/GENERATOR/FIRE DEPARTMENT**

A memo (24-DOC-13) was received from Chief Stried requesting a generator in the fire department be declared surplus property. Chief Stried stated the old Generac 40KW generator is old and unusable. The generator has previously served the ESDA Center, and was replaced after it was determined that repairing it would exceed the value and cost more than replacing it. He will work with fleet maintenance on the best way to sell, recycle or simply dispose of the generator.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Holmes to that an Ordinance (24-O-8) be passed declaring a Generac 40KW generator in the fire department as surplus property. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

**LAPTOP PURCHASE/POLICE DEPARTMENT**

A memo (24-DOC-14) was received from Chief Barden requesting to purchase 8 laptop computers in the police department. Chief Barden stated in a continued effort to provide the best equipment to employees, he is looking to purchase new laptops for the Detective Bureau. The laptops are semi-ruggedized for use in the field and squad car. Additionally, they will double for the use in the office with the purchase of the office dock station. Due to the nature of use with the devices, the quote includes both the desktop docking station as well as the 5-year bumper to bumper warranty. The item is budgeted for in the FY24 JETSB fund and qualifies for reimbursement to the City.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Frierson that an Ordinance (24-O-9) be passed authorizing and approving the purchase of the products from Ultra Strobe Communications, Inc. for laptops and related equipment for the police department. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed

**VARIANCE/SECTION 10-49(1)(b)/ZION MUNICIPAL CODE**

A memo (24-DOC-15) was received from Director Ianson requesting four Variances from the Zion Municipal Code Section 10-49(1)(b), Section 10-49(2), Section 10-49(7) and Section 82-156. D.R. Horton, Inc. is interested in developing 35 lots in the Shepherd's Crossing subdivision, Zoning Docket 24-Z-4. Planning & Zoning recommends to approve the Variance requests with a condition on the fourth request that a representative from D. R. Horton work with Staff for the calculations of the Impact Fees.

Administrator Knabel stated he understands this may have an impact on housing values in the area but for taxes to reduce, they need to increase the tax base. They can choose to not develop and not have the bases go up or grow the base and pull all values up. The way tax calculations work is values go up and rates go down so the tax base is shared by everyone. The goal is to grow the tax base over time to reduce the burden on the City as a whole. Additionally, this will look to increase the population base for the 2030 Census to achieve Home Rule status. This will help give the City additional tools to address Crime Free Housing and other issues. Part of the City's Comprehensive Plan is to encourage residential development. There is limited land throughout the City available for this. New construction margins are very difficult for housing. While values of current housing have gone up so have construction costs and differences in impact fees could make a difference of killing a development opportunity. The City still wants the development even without impact fees as those fees are used to address different demands on infrastructure and schools to address their issues. Commissioner Holmes stated she was at the Planning & Zoning meeting when this was proposed. Currently there are 5 vacant houses in the neighborhood and she wonders how this development will affect those vacant properties. Administrator Knabel stated it is a hard thing to address. Houses are still getting bought up quickly. There could be other factors why they are not selling and without knowing details, it could be hard to determine why. The market is still strong on sale of properties. Commissioner Holmes stated a resident mentioned his property taxes are currently \$10,000 and is at the point where he is considering walking away and if these lots are developed, what will it do to his property taxes. Additionally, she asked if all the homes will be built all at once or over time. Steve Bauer, attorney for D. R. Horton stated the intent is to initially start with 5 building permits and then move forward at 5 per month. Commissioner Fischer asked why they are reducing the square footage of the homes. Mr. Bauer stated they evaluate the conscience of homes in the market and they are building homes appropriate for the market consistent with the market and the specific subdivision. Commissioner Fischer asked if the cost of materials a labor are the reasons for the reductions. Mr. Bauer stated they can control the cost of a home by the size of the home. Commissioner Fischer asked what the impact will be when they go to sell their homes when the previously built homes are larger. Mr. Bauer stated he does not believe that it would be the case as a newer home has a higher per sq. ft. value. Commissioner Holmes asked what the value of the new homes will be. Mr. Bauer stated low to mid \$300's turning more towards low. Administrator Knabel stated they would not invest in the project if they didn't think they could sell them. Commissioner Holmes stated the current homeowners are concerned about the values of the older homes to the new homes. Administrator Knabel explained how the quadrennial, tax rates and taxes work. Often times taxes are increased due to the levies. Commissioner Holmes stated it was mentioned at P & Z that the people that would be buying these homes would be a younger age couple and asked how it compares to current homeownership in the City. Administrator Knabel stated they are seeing the majority of younger families purchasing homes. The older generation is staying put in their homes which is causing a supply issue. He noted that developers are starting to build new homes again and they are starting to see the margin be worthwhile to get a price more than it costs to build. Mayor McKinney stated housing prices going north have gone up significantly making homes here more appealing. They need a newer housing stock in the City as it is good for the economy. Mr. Bauer noted regarding the age demographics, the anticipated age for the home buyers are the mid 20's to early 30's. Historically, half of the home buyers are first time home buyers. They are trying as much as possible to replicate the same development from 20 years ago. Commissioner McDowell asked if the increase in the EAV is favorable to the City. Administrator Knabel stated it was. Commissioner Frierson stated research supports that it is where the market is trending and Zion tends to lean towards a starter home community. Regarding the concerns on the square footage. They will be keeping the homes esthetically similar as far as the front, and you can get a lot more efficiency in less square footage. As for the concerns regarding pricing, assessed value and market price tend to follow each other. Based on his research those would not be immediate increases and would see a slight drag over time. The assessed value will be looking at the average over the last 3 years.

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson, seconded by Commissioner McDowell that an Ordinance (24-O-10) be passed granting a Variance to Section 10-49(1)(b) of the Zion Municipal Code to reduce the minimum livable square footage from 200 square feet to not less than 1600 square feet for a two-story

single-family home. This reduction will match previous homes built in the subdivision. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer aye; Holmes, abstain; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

**VARIANCE/SECTION 10-49(2)/ZION MUNICIPAL CODE**

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson, seconded by Commissioner Fischer that an Ordinance (24-O-11) be passed granting a Variance to Section 10-49(2) of the Zion Municipal Code to reduce the minimum foundation requirement from 1000 square feet to not less than 570 square feet. The proposed foundations will range approximately from 579 square feet to approximately 865 square feet. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer aye; Holmes, abstain; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

**VARIANCE/SECTION 10-49(7)/ZION MUNICIPAL CODE**

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson, seconded by Commissioner Fischer that an Ordinance (24-O-12) be passed granting a Variance to Section 10-49(7) of the Zion Municipal Code to reduce the minimum garage sizes from 500 square feet to not less than 425 square feet, with no measurements less than 18'-6". The proposed garage sizes will be ranging from approximately 430 square feet to approximately 474 square feet. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer aye; Holmes, abstain; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

**VARIANCE/SECTION 82-156/ZION MUNICIPAL CODE**

It was moved by Commissioner Fischer, seconded by Commissioner Frierson that an Ordinance (24-O-13) be passed granting a Variance to Section 82-156 of the Zion Municipal Code to keep the Impact Fees the same as in the subdivision PUD. The Impact Fee agreements just recently expired in 2023. The request is to keep these fees at the 2023 amount. Over the 20-year agreement, the fees were adjusted annually with CPI, which will bring them to the 2023 amount. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer aye; Holmes, abstain; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

**SPRINKLER SYSTEM WAIVER/1903 SHERIDAN ROAD**

A memo (24-DOC-16) was received from Chief Stried requesting approval of a sprinkler system waiver. Chief Stried stated he is requesting approval to waive the sprinkler system requirement following a Change of Use inspection and occupancy application for 1903 Sheridan Road. It is in reference to Section 34-43 of the City Code regarding sprinkler system requirements for "expansion, interior alterations, or remodeling of occupancies". Bullet point 3 states "A project that entails a change in 'Use Group' for any part of the building" would be kick in the sprinkler system requirement. This is a former private residence that was purchased by the new owner to operate as an accountant/tax preparation business. They have made all proper Building Department required upgrades, will have a monitored fire alarm system in the business, and will have limited customers and foot traffic entering the building (appointment only and no more than five). Mr. & Mrs. Krystel and Christian Guzman have supplied the attached notarized affidavit attesting to these details. He supports waiving the sprinkler system requirement for this request. Additionally, it is not the intention to make the decision precedential in nature and is based on the merits of this specific request only. If the occupancy or business type changes from accountant/tax preparation to something different, the current and/or new owners will be advised that a sprinkler system addition may be required.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Holmes to approve the waiver of sprinkler system for the property located at 1903 Sheridan Road. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

**SQUAD CAR PURCHASE/POLICE DEPARTMENT**

A memo (24-DOC-17) was received from Chief Barden requesting approval of a budget amendment and purchase of three squad cars. Chief Barden stated he is seeking a budget amendment of \$122,250 for the purchase of 3 Police Interceptor Squad Cars. Staff has researched and located new 2024 squads at a discounted rate from the 2025 model year. He requests approval of the quote from Sutton Ford as presented. This purchase would eliminate the need to budget the purchase in the next fiscal year. The budget amendment does not include the outfitting costs. Those costs will be presented as an additional budget amendment or will be ratified in the next fiscal year budget.

It was moved by Commissioner Fischer, seconded by Commissioner McDowell to approve a budget amendment and purchase of 3 squad cars in the police department in the amount of \$122,250. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Fischer aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

**DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTARY**

Chief Barden reminded residents as the weather gets nicer to keep an eye out for bike riders and walkers.

Administrator Knabel stated there has been a lot of attention called to the construction on Sheridan Road. The City’s only involvement is the water main for Beach Park residents, for which the State is paying for. The City has no control over any of the project. This is a Beach Park decision and the traffic is being re-routed by them. Additionally, he shared information regarding the Town Hall event going on at the Zion Park District Leisure Center on Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. Senator Mary Edly-Allen and State Representative Joyce Mason will be addressing citizen concerns and this will be a great opportunity to have voices heard.

Commissioner Fischer encouraged residents to patronize businesses on Sheridan Road. They may be reduced business due to the closure of Sheridan Road.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

March 4-16	M-F - 9-5 Sat – 9-2	Early Voting at Zion City Hall
March 5	7:00 p.m.	Zion City Council Meeting Cancelled due to Early Voting
March 19	6:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Zion Township Board Meeting Zion City Council Meeting

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, it was moved by Commissioner Frierson, seconded by Commissioner McDowell and unanimously approved the meeting be adjourned at 7:50 p.m. Motion carried.

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City Clerk