

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE ZION CITY COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 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 Frierson, Holmes, McDowell, Fischer, and Mayor McKinney. A quorum was present.

Also present: Fire Chief Justin Stried, Police Chief Eric Barden, Public Works Director Ray Roberts, Building & Zoning Director Richard Ianson, Finance Director Kris Conway, City Administrator David Knabel and City Attorney James Vasselli.

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

**AGENDA CHANGES**

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

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

**CITIZEN COMMENTS**

Julia Bucchi, Zion, shared issues regarding sewage back-up from the recent heavy rains. She asked what Zion is doing to prevent back-ups and what can be done to assist with the clean-up.

Mary Lou Hiltibran, Zion ESDA Director, gave a monthly report of the recent activities that ESDA performs in assistance to the City. She invited those who wish to make a difference in the City to consider joining ESDA. Mayor McKinney thanked Ms. Hiltibran and ESDA for all they continue to do for the City.

Helmut Peter, a representative of the petitioners regarding the 1903 Kenosha Road Project. He thanked the Council for the opportunity to respond to their issues to which he previously gave written responses. He noted that he was available to address any additional questions.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

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

- (a) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** a Regular Meeting held on May 21, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.; approval but not release of Closed Session Minutes of a meeting held on May 21, 2024 at 7:46 p.m.

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

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

- (a) **BILLS:** Vouchers 146099 through 146122 drawn on Huntington National Bank, N.A. Total: \$587,546.87.

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

**RESOLUTION/ILLINOIS PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY LOAN PROGRAM**

A memo (24-DOC-57) was received from Director Roberts regarding the Illinois Public Water Supply Loan Program. Director Roberts stated the Water Department is currently conducting an inventory of lead and galvanized water service supply lines throughout the City. They anticipate completion of the inventory by October 2024. Staff has been investigating different funding opportunities to accomplish the required replacement of the service lines. One funding opportunity is for the City to apply for an IEPA Lead Service Line Replacement Loan. This a low interest loan with a possibility of up to 80% loan forgiveness. However, if approved, the City will be responsible for 100% of the service line replacement cost. Estimated cost of replacement is \$10,000 to \$15,000 per service line. Within the requested loan amount is the cost of design and construction engineering. Requested loan amount is \$5,278,000.00 with a 30-year term. The application requires approval of an ordinance to incur the debt amount and a resolution for Administrator Knabel's authority to sign the application forms and documents. Staff requests and recommends approval to take all reasonable steps to submit the loan application. Funding for repayment of the loan will be an item within the future Fiscal Year Water Budgets. He understands that this seems like a big number but it is driven off an estimate. Currently, it looks like it may be around \$400,000. He noted that they are 75% through the City and have on only found 30-35 but wants to make sure they are covered and not have to come back if they have a heavy area. Commissioner McDowell asked what the criteria was for forgiveness of the loan. Director Roberts stated it is based on the census numbers and those located in a low-income area. Commissioner Frierson asked if the worst-case scenario occurs with 80% not abated what is the solution to pay for it. Director Roberts stated the payment is for a 30-year period if they had no forgiveness they are looking at about \$200,000 to \$300,000 that would be taken directly out of the infrastructure portion of the line item in the Water Fund. Commissioner Frierson asked if there was any range on the low interest. Director Roberts stated not that he could tell but has seen in previous years between 1-2%.

It was moved by Commissioner Holmes, seconded by Commissioner Fischer that a Resolution (24-R-12) be passed authorizing the execution of Illinois Public Water Supply Loan Program Application documents. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Frierson, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried. Resolution passed.

**ORDINANCE/PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY LOAN PROGRAM FUNDS**

It was moved by Commissioner Holmes, seconded by Commissioner Fischer, that an Ordinance (24-O-45) be passed authorizing the City of Zion to borrow funds from the Public Water Supply Loan Program. The vote on roll call was: Frierson, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye; Motion carried Ordinance passed.

**ORDINANCE/PURCHASE/FLOCK GROUP INC**

A memo (24-DOC-58) was received by Chief Barden requesting approval of a service agreement with Flock Group Inc. Chief Barden stated the City is currently partnered with Flock Industries to use technology to abate crime and criminal activity. While already using LPR technology, Flock Industries offered a free trial year of their innovative gunshot detection software. They have used this technology over the last year. During this time, they have been alerted to numerous shooting scenes prior to a citizen call. This has improved the response time significantly to these types of calls. Based on the effective nature of the combined technologies through Flock Industries, he requests a continued partnership. The 3-year agreement offers a \$10,000 cost reduction per year and locks the price in until 2027. Commissioner Fischer asked how many alerts there have been. Mayor McKinney asked why Flock products have been so good helping the City reduce crime and how they operate. Chief Barden stated the LPR and the gunshot detection system work in concert together. They have faster response times because the notifications come right to the squad car computers and the officers and Sergeants can see it on their desktops as well. If they have a stolen car or gunshots that are heard they don't have to wait for a caller, they get the information directly from the software right to the computers. He noted the average time is 20 seconds, sometimes faster. Mayor McKinney asked how this works with other communities in solving crimes in the area. Chief Barden stated they work tightly with other neighboring communities because they can identify an offending vehicle in a crime and put out an auto alert so they can see when that vehicle comes into a town. He stated over the last year they have been able to categorize 581 total alerts; of those alerts 201 of those identified as single gunshot alerts, 294 for fireworks alerts and of the 581 initial calls total of multiple gunshot alerts were 86. Commissioner Frierson asked if they will be staying with the existing coverage area or if they will be expanding it. Chief Barden stated in using heat mapping they have identified the coverage area to stay the same.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Holmes, that an Ordinance (24-O-46) be passed authorizing and approving the purchase of products and services (Flock Safety Platform for the Zion Police Department) from Flock Group Inc. or a related entity. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Frierson, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

### **ORDINANCE/MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT/ZION POLICE DEPARTMENT**

A memo (24-DOC-59) was received by Chief Barden requesting approval of an agreement for mental health services to support the Zion Police Officers. Chief Barden stated as part of the continued effort to support Zion Police Officers through the myriad of difficult calls they see, they have put together a comprehensive plan to address the overall health and well being of each officer. They have implemented to date, updated training and instruction as well as providing a modern physical fitness center, the last component is the mental health piece. He has instructed staff to research and seek out opportunities to address the mental health support piece. The “We Never Walk Alone” foundation was set up to help first responders cope and manage stressors of the job.

We Never Walk Alone is a private agency that provides Nationwide Peer Support and a Mental Health Network. The agency provides:

- 24/7 Access to nearly 400 trained peer supporters
- Access to nearly 125 Mental Health Professionals
- Online self-assessment tests to help officers go in the right direction for mental health needs
- A centralized database of external resources for those who do not wish to speak to any peers
- Provides training to the four officers we contribute to the pool of peer supporters
- This service allows officers to speak to other officers who do not work for Zion and gives them a starting point to access any mental health resources
- Provides specialized Veteran’s resources

The required contributions, costs, and commitments are as follows:

- Formally train 4-5 officers through We Never Walk Alone to be added to the pool of peer supporters. We have four committed to this as of right now
- Agree to a three-year commitment (early termination requires 80% payment of balance remaining for three years)
- \$30 per officer per year, \$1,560 per year x three years is \$4,680 (Billed Annually)
- \$30 per civilian employee per year, \$300 per year x three years is \$900 (Billed Annually)
- Total three-year cost is \$5,580 (\$1,860 per year)
- Cost of \$30 per employee is grandfathered in forever as long as we never leave We Never Walk Alone

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Frierson, that an Ordinance (24-O-47) be passed authorizing and approving services (peer support and mental health services for members of the Zion Police Department). The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Frierson, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

### **ORDINANCE/SURPLUS PROPERTY/POLICE DEPARTMENT**

A memo (24-DOC-60) was received by Chief Barden requesting various computer items in the police department be declared as surplus property. Chief Barden stated that staff has completed some housekeeping and organizational tasks within the Police Department. They have identified several items of surplus equipment mainly old, broken or non-serviceable items. The following items have been collected and categorized as surplus:

Printers - 2  
 Computer Monitors – 7  
 Computers (hard drive removed) – 10  
 Old keyboards, mice, and chargers – several  
 Old Hard Drives – Several  
 Assortment of Cords and Cables

The request is that all items be declared as surplus property and destroyed or disposed of appropriately.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Holmes, that an Ordinance (24-O-48) be passed declaring various items in the police department as surplus property and destroyed or disposed of appropriately. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Frierson, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

### **ZONING CHANGE/1903 KENOSHA ROAD**

A memo (24-DOC-61) was received by Director Ianson requesting a Zoning Change at the property located at 1903 Kenosha Road. Director Ianson stated that Dom Field, LLC is seeking a Zoning Change from LM (Light Manufacturing to G-1 (General Industrial) as petitioned by Dom Field, LLC, Zoning Docket 24-Z-8. The re-zone request is to enable them to apply for a Special Use Permit to operate a Truck Service Repair/Lease Parking Facility.

At the April 16<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting, the Council has questions and concerns regarding the use at this location. A summary of the responses was provided to the Council.

If the Council considers their request, Staff is recommending that they make the requirements along with any additional conditions the Council may have, part of the Special Use Permit.

At the April 4, 2024 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting, they recommended to deny the request with a vote of 4-1.

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson and seconded by Commissioner McDowell to deny the request of Dom Field, LLC for a Zoning Change at the property located at 1903 Kenosha Road. The vote on the roll: Commissioners Frierson, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, nay; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

### **SPECIAL USE PERMIT/1903 KENOSHA ROAD**

A memo (24-DOC-62) was received from Director Ianson requesting a Special Use Permit to operate a Truck Service Repair/Lease Parking Facility at the property located at 1903 Kenosha Road. Attorney Vasselli asked if there was a recommendation from the Zoning Board on this Docket. Director Ianson stated the Zoning Board voted to deny the request. Attorney Vasselli noted that the vote to deny will be consistent with the recommendation put forth by the Zoning Board for Zoning Docket 24-Z-9.

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson and seconded by Commissioner McDowell to deny the request from Dom Field, LLC for a Special Use Permit (24-Z-9) to operate a Truck Service Repair/Lease Facility at the property located at 1903 Kenosha Road. The vote on the roll: Commissioners Frierson, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, nay; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

### **REDEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT/GRAY'S ANIMAL HOSPITAL INC.**

A memo (24-DOC-63) was received by Administrator Knabel requesting approval of a TIF Grant for Gray's Animal Hospital. Administrator Knabel stated they received an application for TIF assistance for a new building for Gray's Animal Hospital to expand their existing business within in Zion. It has been a great business for the City and would be a good project., however there were some concerns during the review of the information in the application. He shared some of those concerns. They approached the owner about a loan instead of a grant based on the projected net income increases, which should be easy to payback with projected numbers. They were informed that they would have to wait until June 18<sup>th</sup> to present that agreement. Based on the timing of their SBA loan and project deadlines, they wanted to move forward with their request as presented. He reiterated the fact that it would be a good project for a good business within the community, but financially, he cannot recommend approval based on the information presented. Commissioner McDowell noted that Administrator Knabel had some concerns and asked him to expand on them. Administrator Knabel stated that one of the big challenges on TIF determination of need based on financial criteria and there were financial statement projections that were questionable. He stated some of his bias was due to his experience in Public Accounting. He feels the financial information provided did in part impact his decision. He stated some of that will be mitigated by the fact that there will be a new building within the community with this going through and they would not be able to get the reimbursement without the construction. It will add to the tax base and keep a good business in Zion. Additionally, he noted that this particular TIF fund is fairly new and used \$1.5 million for the Real Wheels incentive so the fund is in a deficit. He also had issues with some corporate accounting things with some start-up costs and loans from shareholders.

Commissioner Frierson stated that in a prior conversation with Administrator Knabel he indicated that he feels there has been a higher level of scrutiny that is not normal of TIF applicants. He was looking at this based on the merit of the project itself. This is for a new building and expansion of an existing business and opens up for some of the other development that is going into that space. Given everything considered, he feels the benefits out way the risks. Commissioner McDowell noted that the applicant sent letters to the Commissioners explaining her situation.

Dr. Gray stated she started her business in 2018 with no clients. She has been in the community for 25 years. She recently hired a third doctor and has about 8,000 clients and eighteen employees. Additionally, she remained open during COVID. Her business has grown fast and 2,000 square feet is not large enough. They are one of the few clinics for a GP Urgent Care that is open 7 days a week. She feels she serves Zion by offering high standard care at a lower cost. Commissioner Frierson asked Dr. Gray to speak to her desire to stay in Zion. Dr. Gray stated she grew up in the area and after graduating worked for a Dr. in Winthrop Harbor. She has grown to love her clients and does not want to leave Zion but needs the grant to stay. Commissioner Fischer asked if there was Clawback provision that is standard with any TIF agreement. Administrator Knabel stated yes, the grant is forgiven over a ten-year period. It is so somebody doesn't improve their business with City funds and flip it for a profit and leave. It can be transferred with Council approval to continue on or the proportionate share is due at closing. Commissioner Frierson stated he would like to follow the recommendation of the TIF Board and move towards approval of the agreement.

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson, seconded by Commissioner McDowell, that an Ordinance (24-O-49) be passed approving and authorizing a Redevelopment Agreement by and between the City of Zion and Gray's Animal Hospital. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Frierson, aye; Holmes, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

#### **DISCUSSION/LIQUOR LICENSE/BMS PROPERTY GROUP/2325 SHERIDAN ROAD**

Attorney Vasselli stated the City Council recently amended the Liquor Code for a more modern mechanism to control the attrition of certain liquor licenses and one that promotes actual City transparency. This is an initial statement made by the possible future operators of a restaurant commonly known as Zogo's. The current operators understand that there is a process and they understand that they have to go to the Liquor Control Commission. He did speak to their attorney but they wanted to introduce themselves to the City Council and provide a level of confidence to the Board that they will see again. They wanted to show that they are responsible operators, have operated other similar facilities responsibly and become a familiar face before the City Council. The potential new owners made an introduction to the Council. They noted their experience in catering, the restaurant/bar business and gas stations. Attorney Vasselli stated the new owners will be going through the process in obtaining a new liquor license. They will come back before the Council with their application and action will be taken at the point.

#### **DISCUSSION/LAKE CONSOLIDATED EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS LAKECOMM PROPOSAL**

Chief Barden stated he recently sent an Intergovernmental Agreement to the Council regarding the new Lake Comm Dispatch Center. The current dispatch center will be closing and the City of Zion and many other agencies within Lake County will be utilizing the services of Lake Comm. Mayor McKinney asked if the new dispatch center will improve response time to issues that they were having in Zion and will there be Zion residents that will have that experience as operators. Chief Barden stated it is going to be a very similar model to what they are currently using in Gurnee. He noted that they have been able to be at the table from the very beginning through Gurnee and they will be able to have a voice and be heard on how things are being done. Additionally, how the process is handled through police dispatching and fire for discussions since day one and have a voice. He indicated that the process will be the same or even improved. Commissioner McDowell noted that the consolidation of EMS is being mandated through legislation and that is why they combined with Gurnee and other departments but asked if there were any other viable options besides this one. Chief Barden stated they have looked into it, and unfortunately, they don't have many other options available. He stated some other smaller municipalities that have looked into it and may be able to go to another center that is already in existence. However, their volume or number of calls for both police and fire requests would not be accommodated at other centers. Additionally, they may lose their seat at the table. They will still be a founding member of this entity. He noted that they will dissolve the current JETSB Board and then will rejoin the new JETSB Board. Commissioner Frierson asked how they plan to staff the center. His concern is the number of Staff, the burnout and if they will be taking on new staff where Zion residents would have the opportunity to apply for those positions. Chief Barden stated there are several different models of hours of work that they are following which was about 121 employees and they would move to the new center. Of that he anticipates a number of current dispatchers that are within the County that are going to apply. They do not have enough dispatchers to fill the seats that are currently anticipated to be open so he believes there will be new job opportunities. He stated a number of dispatchers have been offered retention bonuses. They are being offered a pay schedule to keep them on board and help transition through this. The intent is to hire as many of them as they can. Some of the dispatchers are

taking this as a retirement opportunity. Commissioner Frierson asked if there would be a cost reduction. Chief Barden stated that they currently pay about \$1,050,000.00 for services. The new amount will be \$650,000 for both police and fire combined. He noted that the JETSB funds that they get from the State will now go to the new Board so they will lose funding for equipment such as their radios and other large purchases currently reimbursed by JETSB funds. There will be a \$400,000 net gain in revenue but the City will have to shift their funds to pay for things outright. He does not anticipate that the costs will go over \$400,000. Commissioner Frierson if there will be technological upgrades. Chief Barden stated they are one of a handful in the State moving forward with the state-of-the-art facility. Commissioner Frierson asked if there has been any marketing training communication out to the public. Chief Barden stated not at this time as they are still evaluating the process and getting their ducks in a row. Chief Stried noted that they are in a very comfortable situation partnering with Gurnee. They have had dispatchers leave and they are looking to fill those positions in the interim and presumably those positions would transfer over during the process. Additionally, he noted that the County is taking on the initial start up costs which is a huge benefit to Zion. Chief Barden noted that other municipalities will most likely have additional financial concerns while Zion has already been doing it for a number of years. The fees for Zion have been removed to supplement other communities as Zion will be paying true costs. Commissioner Frierson asked if there have been any discussions regarding price caps. Chief Barden stated there have been no discussions regarding a price cap but have looked at amortization of payments but noted that they have a seat at the table to discuss this and will have a vote to have some control. He stated that he will be presenting the agreements at the next Council meeting.

### DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTARY

Director Ianson stated a date has been set for the annual City Clean-up on Saturday, August 3, 2024 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Accepted items are bulk items, tires and electronics.

Director Roberts noted that he received notice from the Union Pacific Railroad. The road will be closed at Russell Road on Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. for work on the tracks. There will be a detour to Delaney and Green Bay Road. Mayor McKinney asked how residents go about reporting sewer flooding issues. Director Roberts stated any back-up or tree issues that fall on private property should be directed to the City's insurance company through the homeowner's insurance company. The two companies will hash things out. Staff does not get involved. He noted that the most recent flooding was due to 3 days and 2 ½ inches of rain. There were multiple flooded areas due to the excess water. He also noted that sump pumps can contribute to back-ups. Residents connect them to the sanitary illegally which will inundate them. This can cause debris to collect down in the sanitary. This was the case with the sanitary on Edina where it ties into the NorthShore line. All the debris from Sheridan Road and that whole area collected down in there. The Water Department was notified and was out there right away and spent half a day unclogging the drain. They will in the future consider that area a "troubled site" and every 3-6 months will do a preparatory cleaning of that line to make sure it is not catching a lot of debris which should help stop any future backup issues.

Fire Chief Stried stated he is happy to announce the emergency sirens are running correctly after a year of issues. Additionally, he noted that at the last couple of meetings he mentioned CPR and car seat offerings. He noted that this week is National CPR and AED Week. He urged citizens to familiarize themselves with certain aspects of CPR or using an AED and to take classes if possible. He has put out flyers in the lobby of City Hall with information regarding CPR.

Chief Barden shared the following:

- He thanked Officer Robles for organizing the first Coffee with a Cop on June 1st. Additionally, he thanked McDonald's for hosting the event. They had a great turnout with great conversation and are hoping to do it again in October. Regarding flooding issues; he asked residents that if they see roads that are flooded to not drive through them. It will damage their car and it will shut down. They will have to go out there and block traffic and keep people out of the cars. They had a number of vehicles stranded and had to be towed. He asked that residents help out by cleaning the street drains.
- He noted that solicitors need permits to walk the City. Public Works has had issues with fraudulent solicitors peddling misinformation and trying to get into people's homes unwarranted. City employees will have City badges along with City clothing and City trucks. If residents have any questions, they can call Public Works or the Police Department.

Administrator Knabel shared the following:

- Regarding sewer back-ups, residents should not put grease down the drain or flush wipes. These are the two biggest causes of clogged drains. Public Works is constantly having problems with this.
- The City of Hope had filed for property tax exempt status as a nonprofit which would have had an impact of \$5 million in taxes that they were paying. The City went to the County to protest against it for all the taxing bodies and the County Board recommended to deny the application. It went down to the Illinois Department of Revenue and they also denied the exempt application. They still continue to work with City of Hope to move forward on pursuing other avenues to make sure they remain a good partner and neighbor for the City going forward.
- They received notice that Senator Edly-Allen was able to get \$800,000 of funding for the City towards the new Fire Station #2. It still has to go to the House side and get approval as part of the budget but she did give them notice that she has earmarked the money for the City of Zion. They are taking amounts off that cost wherever they can, looking for grant funding. They have been setting aside money for the project but every dollar they can get to offset the costs is good news.

Commissioner Fischer announced this week is the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Normandy Invasion.

Mayor McKinney stated his departmental commentary is based on comments directed towards himself and the City Administration at the last ZBTHS School Board Meeting made by one of the board members. They were described as sneaky, behind the scenes and unprofessional. He felt the comments were unfounded as the people he has worked with in the City have been nothing but transparent to all of the residents. The center of the comments was based on money that the City of Zion, not any of the other taxing bodies, was able to go to the State and get. They will receive \$15 million a year for the next 23 years for the Zion community. Eight years ago, Mayor Hill started the effort toward the Federal Government as part of the 1982 Nuclear Waste Act to get money for storage of the spent fuel rods that was preventing the City from being able to develop the lakefront. While still talking with the Federal Government, the City of Zion came up with another plan. Com Ed was going to get a bailout from the State and the City Administrator wrote our State Legislators a letter stating if Com Ed was going to get money, then the City should get money. The State Reps in Lake County went down to the State because of the relationships the City built with them to help get them money. Money that was designed to lower property taxes. Through the relentless focus for work of the City of Zion leaders and legislators, they won a meaningful battle. The State agreed to send \$15 million to the Zion community for the next 23 years as a form of economic medication related to the nuclear plant as a form of property tax relief and economic development. The Administration has been completely transparent about the process and have met with every taxing body on multiple occasions including the schools. Every taxing body excluding District 6 agreed that the best use of the money was tax abatement to help the City and its citizens. An agreement was signed by the City of Zion, the Zion Park District, the Library, the Township and the Township Assessor agreeing to use the money to lower taxes. The ZBTHS Superintendent attended every meeting and agreed that lowering taxes was the best use of the money as everyone in the community would benefit. At the 11<sup>th</sup> hour right before the Board Meeting he flipped and based on the comments of one of his board members and the unanimous vote of the board to not support lowering taxes for the residents. They cannot come to any under conclusion that he misrepresented to his board members about what the process was about and his participation agreement on the issues of lowering taxes. Even though he attended every meeting and continuously agreed to use the money to lower taxes. Mr. Rodriguez decided that it was in the best interest of the school districts to not commit to lowering taxes. In the allocation of funds, he deemed that District 6 not only needed 44% of the property taxes already being paid by residents but also the additional \$6.1 million of funding from the State for the next 22 years and that reducing taxes that are currently hurting the residents and businesses was too much of a burden for both school districts. He misrepresented his position to the school board and demanded 44% of the \$15 million continue to go to District 6 and additionally proposed that 25% of the \$15 million continue to go to District 126. This means that an additional \$9.6 million will go to the school districts leaving only \$4.5 million for the remaining taxing bodies, the City, the Park District, the Township, the Library and the Township Assessor's Office to absorb the burden of reducing taxes for the 25,000 citizens of Zion. In addition to this, he would be absolving the school districts of any responsibility for their current financial strain put on the families. He noted that this is not the first time he has demonstrated a lack of integrity and transparency. While he talks of collaboration and teamwork he was quick to pursue his own agenda contrary to what the Zion Leaders Group which represents the community had agreed upon.

Administrator Knabel stated that this has been a 12-year process which all started with trying to get Federal Legislation to try and get funds from the Stranded Act which was a cooperative effort between all of the taxing bodies. They went in a different direction, back in 2021 they worked with State Legislators to try and curb the bailout that they were looking at. He noted that the unfortunate part is that Administrations that are here now, not only the Superintendents but may of the Board Members have come on board after the initial discussions and the initial battle for this began. The discussion was to use the language from the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 to offset the economic and social impact of the plant closure which shifted \$19 million in taxes to the residents and businesses. They only thing ever intended to do with the funds was to lower taxes. They wrote all of the other taxing bodies into the legislation initially based on a proportionate share of the property tax bill. It was never the intent to get the schools \$6 million and \$3 million respectively to just operate on. They proposed taking 75% of the funds they were getting every year and reduce taxes by that amount. This created new capital funds for all the taxing bodies but still be a \$10 million reduction or a 20% reduction of the tax burden on the residents and businesses. What has happened is the money is going directly to the taxing bodies with no offset. While the resolution passed by District 126 was accurate it was not complete. It makes it look like the City is trying go after additional funds. It did not include that of the \$1.9 million the net share would continue to be \$1.9 million of that 60% that they would get, they would be abating 75% of that resulting in a \$6.4 million abatement to taxes. This was presented to every taxing body and they got signatures from everyone supporting reallocation except from District 6 and 126. District 6 was clear from the beginning they would not be looking at abatement for taxes which again was not the original intent. The Superintendent did initially say he was in support of signing the agreement but needed to talk with his Finance Committee, but the resolution was in opposition. He does feel that it was incomplete in telling the truth and whole story of what the efforts are in regards to this. It makes the City look like they are trying to grab at money when actually they were trying to not collect any more than everyone was already collecting but to get an abatement for taxes as promised as intended. That is what was voted on in opposition and then there were claims made that were unfounded.

Mayor McKinney stated noted that he does not like that District #126 accused the City of not being transparent. He noted that they have been transparent with everything they have done. To hide something in a resolution and not include what was admitted and included in a conversation is deception and misrepresentation. He gave examples of how the District has not been transparent in the past including issues between District #126 and the Zion Police Department. He feels if others are going to criticize they need to take a look in their own back yard. He stated he will always take responsibility for something that goes wrong in the City. They, especially David Knabel, have worked hard over the years to bring the taxing bodies together. He respects education as he is a product of ZBTHS as are the Administrator, Police Chief and Fire Chief. They are proud of being ZBs but are trying to elevate the City as a whole. It takes all the taxing bodies together to make the City function. He wanted to make it clear that they are not sneaky, do not make deals behind closed doors and are very transparent.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

June 15	8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.	36 <sup>th</sup> Annual Nostalgia Days Festival
June 18	6:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Zion Township Board Meeting Zion City Council Meeting
July 2	7:00 p.m.	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 Holmes and unanimously approved the meeting be adjourned at 8:32 p.m. Motion carried.

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City Clerk