

REGULAR MEETING – HOUGHTON CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 2009 – 5:30 p.m.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY CENTER

PRESENT: Mayor Robert Backon, Mayor Pro Tem Robert Megowen, Councilors Eric Peterson, Rachel Lankton, Craig Kurtz, Gernot Joachim, and Lee Hauswirth.

Also present for the City: City Manager Scott MacInnes, Clerk-Treasurer Kurt Kuure, and Police Chief John Donnelly.

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: A representative of the Daily Mining Gazette and Beth Patterson.

REGULAR MEETING: Mayor Backon called to order a Regular Meeting of the Houghton City Council and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES: A motion was made by Lankton and seconded by Hauswirth to approve the minutes of the July 27, 2009, Regular Meeting as written.

Yes: All

No: None

Motion carried

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA: City Manager MacInnes added under New Business – Item F – Dee Stadium Improvements.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS COUNCIL: Beth Patterson of 1106 College Avenue addressed the Council about improvements to College Avenue. She would like to see trees replaced and maintained as necessary. When new street lights are installed she does not want them to be too bright. She also mentioned the new apartment buildings on College Avenue. The building in back, which was not on the plan she saw, is 13 feet from the gazebo in the College Avenue Park and she does not want to see the park used as a front yard for the apartments. She also said she was told that the apartments would be rented to new faculty and graduate students,

but they are being rented to regular students. She also asked if the trees that were dug up in the park would be replaced.

City Manager MacInnes explained that the back building was not on the original plan. The owner presented a new plan for this building, which was brought before the Planning Commission, and the site plan was approved. The owner of the building is reseeding the park and putting in a sprinkler system. The trees that were removed were actually on the apartment owner's property and not in the park.

Police Chief John Donnelly spoke regarding the lights on College Avenue. He said the department gets a lot of complaints that drivers cannot see because it is dark on College Avenue at night. He said the present lights are a safety issue. He is working with the Director of Public works to try to find the right light that will not be too bright for people sleeping but bright enough for people walking and driving.

Mr. MacInnes explained that the apartment owner is not actively trying to rent to students, but he cannot discriminate against them. MDOT plans to repave College Avenue next summer.

Councilor Kurtz said the new apartment building was placed in front so the parking lot could be in back and out of view. He said the buildings look good and the owner did a good job.

Eric Peterson said that when the City is looking at lights for College Avenue they should also look at how the new lights will fit in with the lights on Townsend Drive and downtown as College Avenue is between those areas.

PETITIONS AND

COMMUNICATIONS: None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: Mayor Backon called to order a Public Hearing regarding a Rural Development Grant of \$23,000 for a new police vehicle.

Police Chief Donnelly explained that the police need a full-size, all wheel drive sedan with equipment as an alternative to using all SUV's. They will continue to have three vehicles, two SUV patrol vehicles and the sedan, which the chief will use. One of the present SUV's is old and has a lot of mileage on it. The grant is \$23,000 with the City contribution of \$21,000 for a total purchase price of the vehicle and equipment of \$44,000. The match will come out of the Equipment Fund with a contribution from the General Fund. Chief Donnelly explained that the police are looking at a Dodge Charger, which will get better gas mileage than an SUV and be more comfortable.

There were no comments from the audience and no further comments from the Council.

A motion was made by Lankton and seconded by Hauswirth to close the Public Hearing.

Motion carried.
5:53 p.m.

REPORTS: City Manager MacInnes reported that public works is working on water/sewer projects and reconstruction of the docks west of the Bridge by covering them with trex.

Police Chief Donnelly reported that the department had 18 misdemeanor arrests, 1 felony, 13 civil infractions, and 10 city civil infractions. There were no accidents in the construction zone in the past two weeks because of the changes made. Chief Donnelly attended a conference recently regarding new computer software for police departments, which could improve efficiency.

City Manager MacInnes said that in the next few days they expect to have Huron Street open and half of the downtown accessible again. He is starting the process for the purchasing of the Carnegie Building. The marketing survey is due soon.

Councilor Megowen said the Bacco employees are very good. They are polite and go out of their way to help pedestrians.

City Manager MacInnes traveled to Lansing last week to meet with granting agencies about present grants and possible future grants. The DEQ agreed to delay the Huron Creek project until next spring because of availability of materials. He met with the DNR to look for money for Dee Stadium. They informed him that there is no money available through the DNR for indoor facilities. He met with MDOT to seek an enhancement grant for the new islands and roadsides by MTU. He was told that they are spending their money on downtown projects now.

Mr. MacInnes will meet with the MTU forestry department to see what types of trees, size of trees and how to maintain trees along right-of-ways. The City owns a large right-of-way on Portage Cove that is covered with stamp sand. The residents are asking that the City plant trees along these lots to screen residents from the trail. Mr. MacInnes said he would like to implement a policy that the City will only replace trees on residential right-of-ways if the homeowner agrees to maintain the tree. Mr. MacInnes explained that he would apply for a DNR Urban Forestry grant to purchase trees. He believes the City will be eligible for a grant of up to \$3,000. A discussion was held about investing time and money in planting trees on right-of-ways if the homeowner does not maintain them.

UNFINISHED

BUSINESS: A motion was made by Lankton and seconded by Joachim to adopt the City of Houghton Travel Policy as presented.

The Clerk polled the Council:

Yes: Lankton, Joachim, Hauswirth, Backon, Megowen, Peterson, Kurtz

No: None

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS: A motion was made by Lankton and seconded by Megowen to approve the Accounts Payable for August 1-14, 2009, as presented.

The Clerk polled the Council:

Yes: Lankton, Megowen, Kurtz, Peterson, Backon, Joachim, Hauswirth

No: None

Motion carried.

A motion was made by Megowen and seconded by Lankton to approve the grant with Rural Development for the police vehicle and equipment, agree to the terms and conditions of the grant, and authorize the Mayor and City Manager to sign the documents. The City matching funds will come from the Equipment Fund with a contribution from the General Fund.

The Clerk polled the Council:

Yes: Megowen, Lankton, Hauswirth, Joachim, Backon, Peterson, Kurtz.

No: None

Motion carried.

The Council reviewed proposed Ordinance 2009-212. City Manager MacInnes explained that there is a discrepancy between the site plan ordinance, which requires landscaping in six months, and the ordinance regarding green belts, which requires landscaping in twelve months. He would like to change the green belt ordinance to six months. The Clerk will schedule a public hearing on this Ordinance for the next meeting. A discussion was held about when "occupancy" starts. The Council agreed that they interpret "occupancy" to be the date the Certificate of Occupancy is issued.

A motion was made by Lankton and seconded by Hauswirth to adopt **Resolution 2009-1277** to obtain funds from Rural Development to pay bills regarding the Streetscape project. Mr. MacInnes explained that the total owed to MDOT at this time is \$810,792.70. Of this amount, \$100,000 is from the Vibrant Cities Grant, about \$500,000 is sewer and rest is from water.

The Clerk polled the Council:

Yes: Lankton, Hauswirth, Joachim, Backon, Megowen, Peterson, Kurtz

No: None

Motion carried.

The Rental Housing Board will hold a Public Hearing on August 24, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. regarding a request for a rental license at 710 W. Calverley.

City Manager MacInnes will present the Council with a rendering of a new entrance to Dee Stadium that will include a collage of pictures around the entrance as well as some maintenance. A motion was made by Hauswirth and seconded by Megowen to allow the expenditure of up to \$7,000 from the TV Franchise fund toward the outdoor improvements of Dee Stadium.

The Clerk polled the Council:

Yes: Hauswirth, Megowen, Kurtz, Peterson, Backon, Lankton, Joachim

No: None

Motion carried.

A motion to adjourn was made by Lankton and seconded by Megowen.

Yes: All

No: None

Motion carried.
Adjourned 6:40 p.m.

Kurt Kuure
City Clerk