

CITY OF MONROE
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2008

Regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Monroe, Michigan held on Monday, March 3, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Council Members Beneteau, Clark, Conner, McGhee, Molenda, Paisley and Mayor Worrell.

Rosalind Boswell, Secretary, Clerk's Office gave the invocation.

Phillip Anderson, Boy Scout, Senior Patrol Leader, led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Presentations.

Presentation by John Patterson, Monroe County Convention and Tourism Bureau regarding the 2008 River Raisin Ice Harvest Festival.

Presentation by Sam Guich, City Assessor regarding assessed and taxable values.

Mayor Worrell asked if there are some neighborhoods where taxes may go up and other neighborhoods where they will actually go down based on sales in those neighborhoods.

Sam Guich, City Assessor, stated that would probably not happen; the SEV's in every residential neighborhood in the city have decreased ranging from about 1% to as high as 13%. He explained that 70% of the time taxable values are still going up in residential neighborhoods despite the decline in SEV and the other 30% of the time, SEV is going down enough to make the taxable value go down also.

Thomas Veres, 315 Arbor Avenue, asked if that meant the taxes at Mason Run will go down and the taxes in the neighborhoods like Michigan, Arbor, Riverview will go up because those properties are newer and have recently been sold.

Sam Guich, City Assessor, stated that yes it is true, but the parcels with newer construction on them were higher to begin with because of more recent sales activity.

Adam Yeager, 1833 South Custer Road, stated that he has lived in the same house for 37 years and his taxes have been a mess. He asked what is happening on Western Avenue, stating that he is sure property values have dropped at least \$10,000 but the tax statements show only \$1,000 – \$1,500.

Joe Lavelline, 1523 Dixie Drive, questioned what effect the foreclosures have on the assessed value in terms of the calculation, asking if they are weighted equally with non-forced sales or if they are considered a different type of sale entirely than a traditional sale.

Sam Guich, City Assessor, responded stating that post foreclosure sales are more common place and are going to affect the non-forced sales. He stated the more time that goes by and the more frequent these post foreclosure sales become, the more negative effect it will have on the non-forced sales. He stated that

the Assessor's Office did recognize this in the 2008 assessment roll by utilizing post foreclosure sales as long as they were exposed to the market through a real estate broker.

Mark Farris, 419 East Second Street, commented on the back tax issue regarding Ford Motor Company expressing concern that it was not discussed by City Council. He asked how much the consulting firm was paid to make their assessment.

Sam Guich, City Assessor stated that the firm was paid around \$10,000.

Public Hearings.

16 This being the date set for the purpose of reviewing and hearing comments on Proposed Ordinance No. 08-001, as amended, an ordinance to adopt the 2006 International Fire Code, there being no comments on file in writing in the Clerk-Treasurer's Office, the Mayor declared the hearing open.

Mark Farris, 419 East Second Street, expressed concern regarding amendments that make it illegal to own a wood stove.

There being one person present commenting and no comments on file in writing in the Clerk-Treasurer's Office, the Mayor declared the hearing closed.

Council Action.

24 It was moved by Councilman Beneteau and seconded by Councilman Clark that Proposed Ordinance No. 08-001, as amended, an ordinance to adopt the 2006 International Fire Code, be placed on its final reading.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0

Motion carried.

Proposed Ordinance No. 08-001 was then presented for the second time after which the Mayor asked, "Shall this Ordinance pass?"

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0

Motion carried.

Consent Agenda. (All items listed under the Consent Agenda are considered to be routine by Mayor and Council and may be approved by one motion. Any item may be removed for separate discussion by a Councilperson or citizen.)

- A. Approval of the Minutes of the Work Session held on Tuesday, February 19, 2008, the Minutes of the Special Meeting held on Tuesday, February 19, 2008 and the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on Tuesday, February 19, 2008.
- B. Approval of payments to vendors in the amount of \$665,904.49.
Action: Bills be allowed and warrants drawn on the various accounts for their payment.

- 35 American Red Cross Banner Request.
1. Communication from the City Manager's Office, reporting back on a request from the American Red Cross for permission to display a banner across East Front Street from March 3 through April 1, 2008, and recommending that the request be approved.
 2. Supporting documents.
 3. Action: Accept, place on file and the recommendation be carried out.
- 36 Monroe Multi-Sports Complex Banner Request – Free Family Event.
1. Communication from the City Manager's Office, reporting back on a request from the Monroe Multi-Sports Complex for permission to display a banner across Monroe Street from May 12 through June 9, 2008, announcing a free family fun event on June 7, 2008, and recommending that the request be approved.
 2. Supporting documents.
 3. Action: Accept, place on file and the recommendation be carried out.
- 37 Monroe Multi Sports Complex Banner Request – Charity Hockey Game.
1. Communication from the City Manager's Office, reporting back on a request from the Monroe Multi-Sports Complex for permission to display a banner across Monroe Street from August 11 through September 8, 2008, announcing a charity hockey game to be played on September 6, 2008, and recommending that the request be approved.
 2. Supporting documents.
 3. Action: Accept, place on file and the recommendation be adopted.
- 38 Employment Agreement.
1. Communication from the Human Resources Director, submitting an employment agreement between the City of Monroe and Gregory Scott Allen, to employ Mr. Allen on a part time basis following his retirement on February 29, 2008, and recommending that the agreement be approved.
 2. Supporting documents.
 3. Action: Accept, place on file and the recommendation be carried out.
- 39 Downtown Development Authority Skyline Decoration Request.
1. Communication from the City Manager's Office, reporting back on a request from the Downtown Development Authority for permission to display skyline decorations across East Front, West Front and Monroe Streets from November 15, 2008 through January 15, 2013, and recommending that the request be approved.
 2. Supporting documents.
 3. Action: Accept, place on file and the recommendation be carried out.

40 Monroe County Historical Society Custer Week Activities.

1. Communication from the City Manager's Office, reporting back on a request from the Monroe County Historical Society for permission to hold Custer Weekend Activities on October 4, 10, and 11, 2008, to use St. Mary's Park, bandshell and picnic shelter for an evening concert/fireworks display on October 10th from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. and on October 11th from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for historical presentations and permission to have horses on the property throughout the day, access to Woodland Cemetery on October 4th to conduct a walking tour from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., wreath laying ceremonies, etc. and for the fees to be waived, and recommending that Council approve the request contingent upon items being met as outlined by the administration and that the City Manager be granted the authority to alter/amend the event due to health and/or safety reasons.
2. Supporting documents.
3. Action: Accept, place on file and the recommendation be carried out.

41 Traffic Committee Meeting.

1. Communication from the Director of Engineering and Planning, submitting the minutes of the Traffic Committee meeting on February 27, 2008, and recommending that the minutes be accepted and placed on file and that Traffic Control Orders 056-Temporary, 165-Temporary, 192-Temporary, 208-005 and 216-Temporary be approved.
2. Supporting documents.
3. Action: Accept, place on file and the recommendation be carried out.

It was moved by Councilman Paisley and seconded by Councilman McGhee that items 35, 36, 37, 40, and 41 be approved as indicated and that items 38 and 39 be removed and considered separately.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0.

Motion carried.

38 The communication from the Human Resources Director was presented, submitting an employment agreement between the City of Monroe and Gregory Scott Allen, to employ Mr. Allen on a part time basis following his retirement on February 29, 2008, and recommending that the agreement be approved.

Adam Yeager, 1833 South Custer Road, questioned why the city would re-employ someone on a part time basis, when they are eliminating positions.

George Brown, City Manager, responded stating that this was not one of the positions that was suggested for elimination in the implementation action plan adopted by Council in November. He explained that this is a position which needs to remain staffed and hopefully the person who is second in command will be ready to take over in a period of time with some additional mentoring. He stated that this contract brings the city's licensed water plant director back for an open ended period of time.

It was moved by Councilman Paisley and seconded by Councilman Molenda that item 38 be accepted, placed on file and the recommendation be carried out.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0

Motion passed.

39 The communication from the City Manager's Office was presented, reporting back on a request from the Downtown Development Authority for permission to display skyline decorations across East Front, West Front and Monroe Streets from November 15, 2008 through January 15, 2013, and recommending that the request be approved.

Councilwoman Conner asked what a skyline decoration is and commented that the time frame seems to be very long.

George Brown, City Manager, stated that the DDA put at least one of these skyline decorations up last holiday season and are purchasing more. He explained that they want to use all of the banner cable locations in the downtown for future holiday seasons, which run from November 15th through January 15th. He stated that staff review indicates there were no other organizations that used the banner cables at the same time.

Councilman Clark stated that the wording is confusing and suggested that it be amended to read November 15th through January 15th for the years 2008 through 2013.

Councilman Molenda was concerned about making a commitment for that length of time and suggested that it be shortened to less than five years.

Councilman Beneteau stated that the DDA sets aside quite a bit of money for Christmas decorations and committing to a five year period would let them get their money's worth.

Scott Davidson, Director of Public Services, stated that skyline decorations can cost up to \$5,000 and the DDA is asking for a period of time so that they will get their money's worth. He stated this coincides with the banner policy which was adopted by Council with a provision for this block of time to be reserved for holiday decorations.

Councilman Paisley expressed concern that this would conflict with the same time period the 1812 Battlefield Committee would be promoting their event.

Mayor Worrell suggested that the time frame be shortened by one year.

Rick Floraday, Chairman, DDA, 304 East Fifth Street, stated he did not think it would be a problem if the time was shortened by a year.

It was moved by Councilman Clark and seconded by Councilman Beneteau that item 39 be accepted, placed on file and the recommendation be carried out with the following amendment: from November 15th through January 15th for the years 2008 through 2012.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 1 (Councilman Molenda)

Motion carried.

Mayor's Comments.

Mayor Worrell complimented the Boy Scouts for their well manners and thanked them for attending the meeting. He also spoke about challenges that the city is facing, budget difficulties, and loss of revenue

from the Ford/Visteon/ACH Plant. He thanked Mayor Pro Tem Paisley for filling in during his absence and also thanked Council and the community for their support through cards and prayers.

Council Comments.

Councilman Beneteau welcomed Mayor Worrell back and encouraged anyone who is not sure about or has questions regarding the tax issue to contact the City Assessor.

Councilwoman Conner stated that the city attorney is currently researching Charter changes.

Councilman Molenda talked about blight issues and asked if Council thought it should be addressed by each specific offense or if the focus should be on the geographic region.

George Brown, City Manager stated that the city has a full time blight enforcement officer for private property blight issues and also has several inspectors assigned by neighborhoods. He stated that specific issues should be referred to the Building Department or the City Manager but on-street issues are usually handled by the Police Department.

Councilman McGhee welcomed Mayor Worrell back and commended Mayor Pro Tem Paisley for doing an excellent job in the Mayor's absence. He also read a letter from Laura Lavender, (734-265-4600), Lincoln High School, regarding paper recycling which helps schools raise money for projects.

Councilman Paisley also welcomed Mayor Worrell back. He commented on the taxable value of homes in the City and on the approval of Custer Week activities, stating that it is a wonderful event.

Councilman Clark welcomed Mayor Worrell back and thanked the staff and City Manager for posting the recently adopted Goals and Objectives.

Mayor Worrell stated that the Goals and Objectives will be published in the newspaper.

City Manager Comments.

George Brown, City Manager, thanked John Patterson and his staff for their assistance in printing the Goals and Objectives posters. He also gave an update on the retirement component of the operations transformation stating that there have been fourteen city employees who have either retired or announced retirement within the window and stated that this will help to achieve some of the goals as long as the city remains diligent about not filling most or all of those positions. He stated that this is a very tumultuous time.

Charles Evans, Clerk-Treasurer agreed that we are all going through a tumultuous time with staff reductions, transfers, etc. and he hates it.

Citizen's Comments.

Mark Farris, 419 East Second Street, commented on the Ford Motor Company tax situation stating that he doesn't think anyone took it very seriously. He stated that everyone knew it was coming and there should

have been a special meeting held for citizen comments. He also stated that he is opposed to lengthening City Council terms but is in favor of staggered terms.

Thomas Veres, 315 Arbor Avenue, commented on the city's money problems stating that it will escalate with the loss of jobs. He also commented on a rumor that Sterling State Park wants to extend into the Ford property and feels that the city should stay out of it.

Councilman Beneteau commented on the Ford Motor Company tax issue stating that there was discussion in a closed session; it is something that everyone took seriously and it was a decision made by the elected council members. He also stated he has not been involved in any discussion regarding anyone selling the Ford property to the State Park, but if there was any type of demolition to be done it would be done by Ford; not the taxpayers.

Councilman Paisley commented on the SEMCOG meetings he recently attended.

Adjournment.

It was moved by Councilman Paisley and seconded by Councilman Beneteau that the meeting adjourn at 8:55 p.m. until the Regular Meeting on Monday, March 17, 2008 at 7:30 p.m.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0

Motion carried.

Rosalind Boswell
Secretary, City Clerk's Office

Mark G. Worrell
Mayor