

**CITY OF FLORA  
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
131 EAST SECOND STREET**

**September 16, 2024 – 4:30 P.M.**

**OPENING CEREMONIES**

Mayor Rick Slaughter called the Regular Council Meeting of the City of Flora to order and City Clerk Kaci O'Dell called roll. Present were Mayor Rick Slaughter, Commissioner Linda Spicer, Commissioner Jeremy Henderson, Commissioner Phil Wiley and Commissioner Jim Fehrenbacher.

Others in attendance were City Attorney Bob Coble, Assistant Chief of Police Jeremy Ruger, City Administrator/Economic Development Director Mike Stanford, City Clerk Kaci O'Dell, City Treasurer Kim Adair, Building and Zoning Official Chad Bayles and Superintendent of Public Services Toby Rinehart. Two media representatives were in attendance.

Mayor Rick Slaughter led the Pledge of Allegiance and Commissioner Linda Spicer offered the Invocation.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Kelli Massie, on behalf of the Flora High School Student Council, was present to ask for Council approval to block off West North Ave. on the evening of October 9<sup>th</sup> for the Homecoming Parade. Line up will start at 7:00 p.m. at the Depot and the parade will start at 7:30 p.m. traveling east and ending at S. Mill Street. Massie invited the public to the parade as well as bonfire and activities that will be held at the football field following the parade. Mayor Slaughter asked if she had spoken with Assistant Chief Ruger and she stated they had already worked out the details.

**A MOTION TO APPROVE BLOCKING OFF WEST NORTH AVE FOR THE HOMECOMING PARADE ON OCTOBER 9, 2024, WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER SPICER; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WILEY.**

- **Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher**  
**No – None**  
**Abstain – None; Absent – None**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**A MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR THE SEPTEMBER 16, 2024, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING FOR THE CITY OF FLORA WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FEHRENBACHER; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SPICER.**

- **Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher**  
**No – None**  
**Abstain – None; Absent – None**

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

The following items were listed under the Consent Agenda:

- APPROVE REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2024
- APPROVE SCHEDULE OF BILLS FOR AUGUST 28, 2024 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 10, 2024

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILEY; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SPICER.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher  
No – None  
Abstain – None; Absent – None

## **REGULAR BUSINESS**

Mayor Slaughter stated he was glad to see Mr. Wiley and was pleased he was not at his office at the time of the accident that occurred over the weekend.

Commissioner Linda Spicer welcomed Assistant Chief of Police Jeremy Ruger, in Police Chief Guye Durre's absence. She commented that people have mentioned to her that it is nice to see people using the new pickleball courts.

Commissioner Phil Wiley wanted to let everyone know that the upcoming weekend is looking great as far as weather and Tourism has been working hard to put together an event for family entertainment. Entertainment for Friday night includes a movie and magician. Saturday will be the car show, musical entertainment, brew and chili tasting, food trucks, ziplining, rock wall and a bounce house. There will be a lot going on in downtown Flora and wanted to remind everyone to come out and have a great time.

On a separate note, Commissioner Wiley wanted to thank everyone that called, texted, and asked what they can do to help following the accident at his office. He stated we live in an amazing community and it was a miracle that no one was killed or in harm's way.

Assistant Chief of Police Jeremy Ruger asked for Council approval to appoint Becky Wiley as Reserve Chief of Police effective immediately.

A MOTION TO APPROVE BECKY WILEY AS RESERVE CHIEF OF POLICE EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 16, 2024 WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILEY; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SPICER.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher  
No – None  
Abstain – None; Absent – None

City Administrator/Economic Development Director Mike Stanford announced there will be an electronic recycling event in October at a new location: parking lot in front of the former Clay Medical Center at 201 E. North Ave. Once a date is finalized, he will inform the press.

City Treasurer Kim Adair asked for Council approval to remove former City Clerk Rebekah Burgess from banking institutions due to her recent retirement.

A MOTION TO REMOVE REBEKAH BURGESS FROM ALL BANKING INSTITUTIONS WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILEY; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FEHRENBACHER.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

Building and Zoning Official Chad Bayles had two items to be considered.

A MOTION TO PASS ORDINANCE NO. 24-3374; APPROVING THE BID FOR THE SALE OF 339 FAIR AVENUE, FLORA, ILLINOIS (David Persinger - \$1,200.00) WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILEY; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SPICER.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

A MOTION TO PASS ORDINANCE NO. 24-3375; APPROVING THE BID FOR THE SALE OF 315 E SCUDAMORE, FLORA, ILLINOIS (Paul Green - \$1,000.00) WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FEHRENBACHER; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SPICER.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

Superintendent of Public Services Toby Rinehart presented several items for Council's consideration.

A MOTION TO APPROVE JOB CHANGE FOR MATTHEW HARGIS FROM HEAD WATER/SEWER SERVICEMAN (\$40.68/HOUR) TO WATER JOURNEYMAN (\$35.56/HOUR) EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILEY; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FEHRENBACHER.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

A MOTION TO APPROVE JOB CHANGE FOR VANCE SLOAN FROM WATER JOURNEYMAN (\$35.56/HOUR) TO HEAD WATER/SEWER SERVICEMAN (\$40.68/HOUR) EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER SPICER; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WILEY.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

A MOTION TO PASS ORDINANCE NO. 24-3373 APPROVING A CONTRACT FOR LEAF COLLECTION WITHIN THE CITY OF FLORA, ILLINOIS (Pettit Construction 2024 - \$21,000, 2025 - \$22,000, 2026 - \$23,100) WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FEHRENBACHER; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER HENDERSON.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

A MOTION TO ACCEPT A PROPOSAL FROM ELECTROREP FOR BATTERY REPLACEMENT AT THE NORTHWEST SUBSTATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$16,170.00 WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILEY; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SPICER.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

### **CLOSED SESSION**

Mayor Slaughter requested a motion to enter into Closed Session pursuant to:

**5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1)** The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.

**5 ILCS 120/2(c)(6)** The setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the public body.

AT APPROXIMATELY 4:46 P.M., COMMISSIONER WILEY MADE A MOTION TO ENTER INTO CLOSED SESSION; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FEHRENBACHER.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

### **OPEN SESSION**

AT APPROXIMATELY 5:21 P.M., COMMISSIONER WILEY MADE A MOTION TO ENTER INTO OPEN SESSION; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SPICER.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

Commissioner Henderson spoke about an item not listed on the agenda. Henderson handed out informational packets to everyone regarding research he had completed for the new wastewater treatment plant, which is currently set to be engineered by Fehr Graham.

The first point Commissioner Henderson made was that it appears the City would qualify for 45% loan forgiveness if the City took a loan for the new wastewater plant through the IEPA rather than the USDA, as has already been done. Henderson stated the loan forgiveness would amount to \$21 million in savings over the City's current plan. Henderson felt Fehr Graham should have already had the City in the IEPA application process and was not happy that this had not even been brought up by Fehr Graham. He stated that he felt Fehr Graham had dropped the ball on this potential savings for the City and noted the City would need to complete an application to the IEPA by the end of October to be eligible for the next round of funding.

Commissioner Henderson's next concern with the new wastewater treatment plant was the design. After research, including speaking to several operators as well as IEPA employees, he stated that in his opinion that going with the design currently proposed would be a huge mistake. Henderson noted the design would be the first of its kind in the entire State of Illinois and that he questioned whether or not it could hold up to the amount of rainfall we endure. Henderson noted further that the proposed SBR design is very difficult to operate and that the IEPA may not even approve it.

City Administrator Stanford explained in the event of a large rainfall the old wastewater plant's Clarifier and Lagoon would be used as the storm water will rush to those areas and hold. Once rainwater stops it will start releasing back into the plan to be treated. City Administrator Stanford stated that it is cheaper to treat the water than to fix the problem of the City's overall aging infrastructure.

Commissioner Spicer asked, to be clear, if he was presenting 2 different things. 1. Financing through IEPA and 2. Changing the design. She asked who was involved in the initial planning stages of the project. City Administrator Stanford explained the Superintendent of Public Services Toby Rinehart and Head Operator Chuck Behnke were involved in the planning.

Commissioner Henderson urged the council to end the City's relationship with Fehr Graham as they had not put the City into a favorable situation. Henderson also mentioned he was willing to help with the application process through the IEPA. Commissioner Henderson stated if we switched engineers we would be out money already spent on the design but in the end there would be a substantial savings if we went with the IEPA loan.

To close, Commissioner Henderson expressed again how much the City would save if we qualified for the IEPA loan. The 45% forgiveness caps at \$4.8 million dollars per phase of the project. Henderson noted this would dramatically cut down the cost for the City of Flora utility customers which is ultimately the most important thing. He also noted there is a list on the IEPA's website of communities that have been awarded this type of loan. Commissioner Henderson encouraged everyone to go talk to City operators and said he is happy to provide a listing of phone numbers of experts he has spoken to while doing his research. As a final note, Henderson stated Fehr Graham has designed a wastewater plant in Illinois with an oxidation ditch and it works well, so he is baffled why they have chosen a different design for the City of Flora.

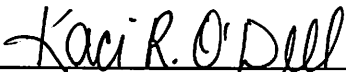
Each commissioner expressed they do not know anything about wastewater and thought the homework had already been done when we chose Fehr Graham. Commissioner Spicer said she does not want to adopt something no one likes, but also does not want change the design simply because the operators are not comfortable with change.

Council Members agreed they all want to find out more about the financing option and why it was not presented to them by Fehr Graham. They would also like to find out more information on the decision of our current design and explore it further.

**ADJOURN**

At approximately 6:06 p.m. with no further business to discuss, Mayor Slaughter requested a motion to adjourn.

COMMISSIONER WILEY MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SPICER. COUNCIL MEMBERS CONCURRED AND MAYOR SLAUGHTER DECLARED SAID MEETING ADJOURNED.

  
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Kaci R. O'Dell, City Clerk

  
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Rick J. Slaughter, Mayor

Approved by City Council on: October 7, 2024