



City Council

City Council Chambers ◊ 524 West Stephenson Street ◊ Freeport, IL 61032

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE REPORT
REGULAR MEETING
Monday, June 10, 2013**

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Freeport, Illinois, Committee of the Whole was called to order by Mayor James Gitz with a quorum being present at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, June 10, 2013, in Council Chambers.

ROLL CALL

Present on roll call: Mayor James Gitz and council members Tom Klemm, Shawn Boldt, Ronnie Bush, Jennie DeVine, Dennis Endress, Sally Brashaw, Mike Koester and Andrew Crutchfield (8).

City Staff Present: Corporation Counsel Sarah Griffin, City Clerk Meg Zuravel, Community Development Director Shelly Griswold, City Accountant Duane Price, Police Chief Jerry Whitmore, Fire Chief Kevin Countryman, Public Works Director Tom Dole and City Engineer Shaun Gallagher

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Alderperson Endress. Alderperson Endress then took over as chairperson of meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – AGENDA ITEMS

No one signed in for public comments.

MINUTES

Alderperson Koester moved for approval of the minutes May 13, 2013, seconded by Alderperson DeVine. Motion prevailed by voice vote without dissent.

DISCUSSION OF THE MATTER OF CHANGING NORTH CHICAGO AVENUE IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA FROM A ONE-WAY STREET TO A TWO-WAY STREET – PRESENTATION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Gitz presented information about the pros and cons of changing Chicago Avenue from Douglas to Iroquois Street from a one way to a two way. He stated he had solicited comments from the public through a publication in the Journal Standard and also sent letters to property owners in the downtown. He stated the City's Public Works Department favors changing the street into a two-way thoroughfare. The Freeport Downtown Development Foundation favors this change as well and there were letters of support received in his office from Freeport Downtown Development Foundation, Tivoli Enterprises (owner Willis G. Johnson of the Classic Cinemas Lindo Theatre), and Merle Norman Cosmetic Studio. He has received letters against changing Chicago Avenue from a one-way to a two-way from Tom Mathews of T & D Toy and Hobby and from the officer in charge (Johnny O'Shea) of the United States Post Office.

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Of particular concern, discussion was held on the placement of the snorkel boxes at the post office and the need to make allowance so drivers can place mail without having to exit their vehicle. Members of the Committee voiced their concerns to favor easy access for elderly and handicap customers of the Post Office.

Discussion was held regarding the problems that would arise if all blocks of Chicago were changed to a two-way excepting the block of the Post Office. Discussion was held that Chicago Avenue is the only street in the downtown that runs north and south and still remains one way. The committee then discussed other one way streets which run east and west which are State Highways such as Route 75 leading into the downtown also know as Stephenson and Douglas Streets. Discussion then proceeded about the snorkel boxes and the parking for the Post Office.

Cal Wescott, 563 N Greenfield, Freeport Illinois, spoke as a business owner in the downtown and member of Freeport Downtown Development. He stated he had spoken with the Post Office representative and they would favor the two-way if there was compensation for the boxes at the Post Office. He stated if it was changed to a two way, they would then need to remove the snorkel portion of the boxes and place them similar to Exchange Street boxes.

Aldersperson Boldt made a motion to refer this draft ordinance to the council floor for consideration, seconded by Aldersperson Bush. Motion passed by voice vote without dissent.

DRAFT ORDINANCE EXTENDING ELECTRICITY TAX WHICH WAS SET TO EXPIRE ON JULY 31, 2013

This item was referred from the Committee of the Whole meeting on May 13, 2013. Accountant Duane Price presented this issue and stated this electricity tax is set to expire on July 31, 2013 based on action by the council. He stated if the City does not do anything then it will expire on its own and that it provides revenue in the amount of \$460,000 per year to the general fund of the City. Accountant Price stated this does not change the amount of the tax based on kilowatt hours used but removed the sunset clause to allow it to continue. Aldersperson Crutchfield made a motion to refer this draft ordinance to the council floor for consideration, seconded by Aldersperson Koester. Motion passed by voice vote without dissent.

THE FOLLOWING ITEM WAS REFERRED FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING ON MAY 13, 2013: DISCUSSION OF COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE STRUCTURE OR HAVING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETINGS

Aldermen Bush asked for this to be brought forth. The question is will there be four committees or two with only eight members. There was discussion regarding the pros and cons of the committee structure versus Committee of the Whole and whether the outcome would restrict the flow of items that need to go to council. Council members provided their opinions of having discussions at the Committee of the Whole where everyone can hear it. Discussion was held regarding the benefit of having all the council members hearing the same thing at the same time and when you split off to committee then some members will not hear the justification and reason for bringing items to the council.

Discussion was held on the difference between the Committee of the Whole compared to the committee structure where each committee would be responsible for setting their agendas and then

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preparing from that their own minutes. It was recommended to continue the discussion at the next committee meeting. Mayor Gitz stated it was the council's decision and not the Mayor's but he is partial to committees because he sees the committee chair as becoming an expert. He was asked to provide some recommendations from other municipalities. Discussion was held regarding the ability to break-out to a separate committee for item such as the budget or tax levies.

Aldersperson Klemm suggested each member of the council jot down on a piece of paper for the next meeting possible structure for the committees that they would prefer. Corporation Counsel Griffin reminded council that they have the ability to refer an item such as this to the Executive Committee and for that committee to come back with suggestions to the Committee of the Whole. It was discussed that having committee structures from other municipalities would be a helpful tool in proceeding with this discussion.

Aldersperson Crutchfield made a motion to discuss this item at the next Committee of the Whole meeting and to review possible organization/format for committee structures used by other municipalities and as provided by Mayor Gitz, seconded by Aldersperson Koester. Motion passed by voice vote without dissent.

THE FOLLOWING ITEM WAS REFERRED FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MAY 20, 2013: ORDINANCE #2013-23, AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF FREEPORT, STEPHENSON COUNTY, ILLINOIS, PROVIDING FOR THE ISSUANCE OF TAXABLE GENERAL OBLIGATION REFUNDING BONDS, SERIES 2013B, PROVIDING THE DETAILS OF SUCH BONDS AND BONDS FOR A LEVY OF TAXES TO PAY THE PRINCIPAL OF AND INTEREST ON SUCH BONDS, AND RELATED MATTERS

Accountant Price stated the market is not right to move on this item. He said that when it was first presented to council on May 3rd the market's interest rates were favorable to act on this. They have since gone down and he would recommend tabling this item. He also presented that he did not have enough information available on the taxable issue of the bonds so he was not comfortable taking action on this. Aldersperson Boldt made a motion to table this item for the general obligation bonds, seconded by Aldersperson Klemm. Motion passed by voice vote without dissent.

THE FOLLOWING ITEM WAS REFERRED FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MAY 20, 2013: ORDINANCE #2013-24, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTERS 288 (EMPLOYEES GENERALLY), SECTION 288.11 "OFFICE HOURS OF CITY DEPARTMENTS" AND CHAPTER 290 COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS), SECTIONS 290.01 "CLASSIFICATION PLAN" OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF FREEPORT (HOURS OF WORK)

Corporation Counsel Griffin stated that before the committee proceeds with the discussion she wanted to apprise them that today she drafted a version of the ordinance which now includes the Water and Sewer Department.

Mayor Gitz provided a letter in regard to the draft ordinance regarding hours of work and stated that most other municipalities and most places of business in Freeport are open for a full eight hours workday with hours being 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. He stated that regular business hours are necessary in order to maintain good faith, credibility and superior service to the public. He stated he recognizes that many City employees already work an eight hour workday, if not more. This ordinance is intended

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more as a threshold and to clarify to the public what hours the doors to City Hall are open. Discussion was held regarding consistency of employee contracts. Discussion was held on some of the exceptions including the Library, sections of the Police Department, and Public Works Department. Corporation Counsel Griffin stated she had placed wording in the draft ordinance which would allow for a special waiver with approval by the Mayor with good cause shown based upon the demonstrated needs of specific departments and should such a waiver be granted by the Mayor, the City Council shall be notified of the same.

Discussion was held regarding notification to the landlord and whether the offices and restrooms would be cleared of the public for the safety of employees who stay later than 5:00 p.m. Mayor Gitz stated he will discuss this with the landlord, Mr. John McConnell. He did not feel it would be an issue because there are other tenants and the building opens at 7:00 am and locks at 5:00 pm. He will make sure the offices are secure by having a maintenance person check the restrooms after 5:00 p.m. Discussion was held on the financial implications of the office hours being extended and Mayor Gitz stated there are no financial implications because the employees are paid for 40 hours per week. Discussion was held on the drop box available in the parking lot off of Green Street for Water and Sewer payments after hours. Discussion was held regarding the Water and Sewer Department needing to count their drawers and whether the payments can be credited to the next day.

Mayor Gitz state that this will apply to everyone in the City Hall. The public offices will be open for forty hours per week.

Aldersperson Klemm made a motion to refer this draft ordinance to the council floor for consideration, seconded by Aldersperson Boldt. Motion passed by voice vote without dissent.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Doug Wilkin, 902 S. 16th Avenue, Freeport Illinois spoke in regard to extending the City office hours and that the building where City offices are located is a temporary situation. He requested a date when the borings will be completed. City Engineer Gallagher stated he should be complete by July.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion (Boldt) duly made and seconded (Crutchfield), the meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

S/ Meg Zuravel
Meg Zuravel, City Clerk