

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE ZION CITY COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2023, AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 2828 SHERIDAN ROAD, ZION, ILLINOIS**

Mayor McKinney called the meeting to order.

On call of the roll the following answered present: Commissioners Holmes, Frierson, 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, and City Attorney James Vasselli. City Administrator David Knabel was absent.

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

**AGENDA CHANGES**

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson, seconded by Commissioner McDowell to accept the City Council meeting agenda with the following changes:

Remove: Item 12. **CLOSED SESSION** – (Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2 “Open Meetings”) for the discussion of filed, pending and/or probable or imminent litigation, sale or purchase of real estate, collective bargaining, legal counsel and personnel

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

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION/SWEARING-IN POLICE OFFICER**

Chief Barden introduced Jose Obispo who was sworn in as a new police officer. He will be attending the Police Academy in January.

**PUBLIC HEARING/ PROPOSED TAX LEVY FOR 2023**

It was moved by Commissioner Holmes and seconded by Commissioner Frierson to open the public hearing at 7:10 p.m. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Holmes, aye; Frierson, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

Director Conway stated that the total tax levy is \$8,732,371 which represents a \$415,031 increase over the prior year extension. The cap for the levy is based on the lesser of CPI or 5%. Since CPI was greater than 5%, the levy amount represents a 5% increase over the prior year extension. Even at a nearly 5% increase in the levy, the City will still be below the increase in costs for City operations. They will continue to look at other revenue sources to help reduce the dependence on property taxes and the resulting burden on the residents and businesses.

The City’s tax rate would go from 2.1113 to 2.0250, which is a decrease of approximately 4.09%. The effect on the City’s portion of taxes on a \$150,000 house, assuming a 9.5% increase in value from prior year, would be an increase of \$53 annually. The assumed increase could vary per property as real estate trends show property values up 10% from a year ago.

The total levy is allocated among 9 different functions. There is some room to reallocate the total based on fund rate limits and requirements, but as currently presented, the revenue is allocated as follows:

	2023 Levy	2022 Extension	Increase (Decrease)
Corporate	194,010	195,365	(164,953)
Street & Bridge	225,000	215,189	-
Fire Protection	741,410	736,925	-
Ambulance Service	537,075	533,826	-
IMRF	275,475	530,962	429,663
Liability Insurance	1,351,098	1,170,903	93,537
Social Security	420,850	389,442	33,658
Police Pension	3,078,158	2,766,204	(30,650)
Fire Pension	1,909,295	1,778,524	36,462
Total	8,732,371	8,317,340	397,717

Fire pension levy amount proposed is \$1,909,295. This is the statutory minimum requirement and represents a \$130,771 increase over the prior year. The recommended actuarial levy amount is \$2,205,994. This plan is currently 48% funded (no increase over prior year). Police pension levy amount proposed is \$3,078,158. This is the statutory minimum requirement and represents a \$311,954 increase over the prior year. The recommended actuarial levy amount is \$3,881,794. The plan is currently 49.5% funded (a .5% decrease over prior year).

As of April 30, 2023, the social security had an estimate fund balance of \$-1,561 after prior balance was utilized. Therefore, we will continue to only levy the amount necessary to cover payroll tax expenses. Liability insurance levy is increasing by \$180,195 due to renewal premiums in workers compensation insurance and other lines of insurance.

In the prior year, IMRF was increased by \$430,000 after a decrease of almost the same the previous year to help free up funds for operational purposes. After the 2022 levy increase, there are reserves in the fund level. The current year levy will use those reserves to offset the rate increase this decreasing by levy by \$255,487. Fire Protection and Ambulance Service were kept at relatively the same levels as prior year. These funds are transferred to the general fund to offset the costs of these services. Street & Bridge was kept at the same level for several years and now a minimal increase is needed. The increase will restore what was removed from this fund due to increases in other funds. The MFT Fund will continue to have additional funds available for road projects due to the increase in the State MFT tax but with the loss of the Rebuild Illinois Bond Grand Funds, additional funds are needed in the fund.

The General Fund levy is the remainder available after all of the other funds have been accounted for. Unfortunately, due to the items above, this only leaves \$194,010 in the General Fund for operations, which represents a \$1,355 decrease in revenue from the prior period. As anticipated, the pension actuarial required funding amounts increased significantly from the prior year resulting in decreasing funding levels in other areas to cover the increased cost to the City. If current trends continue, they will most likely have to eliminate any portion of next year's levy going to general operations.

Mr. Bremner asked why the City contributes to IMRF, and Social Security as they are both considered retirement funds. Director Conway stated Social Security is mandatory no matter what and IMRF is mandatory for eligible employees.

It was motioned by Commissioner Fischer and seconded by Commissioner Frierson to close the public hearing at 7:14 p.m. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Holmes, aye; Frierson, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

### CITIZEN COMMENTS

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 serve as a volunteer with ESDA to go to the City's website and fill out an application. Mayor McKinney thanked Ms. Hiltibran and ESDA for all they continue to do for the City.

### CONSENT AGENDA

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

- (a) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** a Regular Meeting held on November 21, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.; approval but not release of Closed Session Minutes of a meeting held on November 21, 2023 at 7:48 p.m.

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

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

- (a) **BILLS:** Vouchers 144733 through 144829 drawn on Huntington National Bank, N.A. Total: \$536,746.73

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

**ORDINANCE/RETAIL STRATEGIES CONTRACT RENEWAL**

A memo (23-DCO-101) was received from Administrator Knabel regarding a renewal contract with Retail Strategies. Administrator Knabel stated Retail Strategies has served as an extension of the City's Economic Development Department for eight years. On the City's behalf, they monitor and reach out to emerging and expanding businesses that fit Zion demographics. Additionally, they provide analytics on retail market trends, update and prepare marketing materials to present to prospective developers, and represent the City at multiple conventions annually all across the Country. This has been a valuable partnership for the City of Zion and staff recommends approval of the contract for renewal as presented. Commissioner Fischer noted that Retail Strategies was key in getting Starbucks and has been active in current projects.

It was moved by Commissioner Fischer, seconded by Commissioner Frierson that an Ordinance (23-O-67) be passed authorizing and approving an agreement with Retail Strategies, LLC to provide consulting services to the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Holmes, aye; Frierson, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried.

**ORDINANCE/INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT/IDNR/LCPWD**

A memo (23-DOC-102) was received from Director Roberts requesting approval of an agreement for water supply between Lake County Public Water District (LCPWD), Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the City of Zion. Director Roberts stated Illinois Beach State Park has connected a new water service line to the City's existing 12" distribution main. Illinois Beach State Park and Illinois Department of Natural Resources currently are customers of Lake County Public Water District. The new connection adds a second water services for Illinois Beach State Park. The proposed agreement is for Lake County Public Water District to continue as the water supplier for Illinois Beach State Park. Lake County Public Water District will install a new meter and subtract along with the existing meters usage from the City's monthly billing. Staff requests and recommends approval of the agreement for water supply between Lake County Public Water District, Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the City of Zion.

It was moved by Commissioner Holmes, seconded by Commissioner Fischer, that an Ordinance (23-O-68) be passed authorizing an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Lake County Public Water District and the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Holmes, aye; Frierson, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

**ORDINANCE/INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT/ZBTHS 126**

A memo (23-DOC-103) was received from Chief Barden requesting approval of an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Board of Education of Zion-Benton Township High School District 126 and the City of Zion. Chief Barden stated the agreement is in regards to Special Duty assignments. The agreement covers the hire back/security staffing or other related services requested by an entity. Examples of such security staffing may include security at football or basketball games or other similar events that require an officer. He has reviewed the agreement with legal counsel and requests approval of the agreement as presented.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Holmes, that an Ordinance (23-O-69) be passed authorizing an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Board of Education of Zion-Benton Township High School District 126 and the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners Holmes, aye; Frierson, aye; McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

**DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTARY**

Director Ianson stated that Popeye's officially opened this weekend and by all the traffic it appears it will do well. Mayor McKinney stated they will be having an official ribbon cutting and grand opening sometime in the near future. He noted the restaurant is off to a great start.

Director Roberts stated since the beginning of the year the Water Department been conducting an inventory that is IEPA required checking for lead line services to which they are currently 60% complete. He is asking residents to schedule an appointment with Public Works so they can check the line coming into the home. He noted that if a home was built in 1980 or after, lead pipes were outlawed by this time. He suggests residents still do a lead check. He noted that the pipes may not contain lead but the solder on the pipes may. If they are called into the home for any type of service, they will try and do a physical check on the pipes. To date, they have only found 10 but have started to look at the older sections of the City.

He will be looking into sending out flyers in the mail reminding residents to set up an appointment for a check. Mayor McKinney stated there have been difficulties in trying to assess the lead problem nationwide because residents do not want the government to come into their homes. They do not understand that this is a safety measure and the Federal Government provides money to help with this. He hopes to have access to funds to help fix the problem. Commissioner Frierson asked what the next steps are after finding the 10 homes with lead. Director Roberts stated they are looking at what this entails. The City’s current ordinance states that it is the homeowner’s responsibility including the tap. He is looking into the possibility of the City helping out with this. He is hoping to bring a plan forward in February. He stated that if residents think that they may have lead in their pipes, they can get a Brita filter or get a home test. The City does 27 tests a year for lead for water distribution and it have not exceeded the levels and are actually well below the minimum. Commissioner Frierson asked Director Roberts if he will have recommendations for whole house filters. Director Roberts stated it will all be part of the plan he will put together.

Fire Chief Stried noted that the monthly siren test was done this morning. The testing is done on the first Tuesday of the month. They are still working through an issue with dispatch but all sirens in the City should now be working. Additionally, he reminded those with real Christmas trees to keep them watered. He advised to use at least 1 gallon of water per day.

Police Chief Barden reminded residents to be sure their head lights are turned on with it getting darker earlier. He also noted that Shop with a Cop will take place on Saturday at 9:00 a.m. at Walmart. They hope to have 40 families participate. They have received support through donors, high school students and the Fire Department.

Director Conway noted they are preparing for employees W2s and 1099s for vendors.

Commissioner McDowell noted that Shop with a Cop is one of the many activities going on this time of year. CCC is partnering with Zion Township and Kiwanis for the Elf Network. They will be serving 80 families mostly from District 6 amounting to about 250 children. They have 20 people going down to Chicago to help pick out presents for the children.

Commissioner Frierson noted the Coalition for Healthy Communities will be working with local barbers to get free haircuts for kids. Additionally, he noted that the “Community Hub” group meets at the Zion Library every first Wednesday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tomorrow they will be holding an event called “Hold that Thought”. There is involvement from several different organizations; University of Illinois Extension and Rosalind Franklin.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

December 9	9:00 a.m.	Shop with a Cop
December 15	6:00 p.m.	Christmas Tree Lighting at the Zion Park District
December 19	6:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Zion Township Board Meeting Zion City Council Meeting
December 25, 26 January 1, 2		City Offices Closed for the Holiday
January 2		City Council meeting cancelled for the Holiday

**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 7:38 p.m. Motion carried.