

CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor,
1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL

6/23/2025 - Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Harris called the meeting to order at 5:18 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

2. Roll Call

Mayor Harris asked City Clerk Samantha Gange to call the roll.

Present: Alderpersons Linda Barnes, Dylan Parker, Mark Poulos and Mayor Ashley Harris.

Alderpersons Glen Evans and Randy Hurt arrived at 5:22 p.m.

Absent: Alderpersons Jenni Swanson and Bill Healy.

Staff: City Manager Todd Thompson, Attorney Leslie Day, City Clerk Samantha Gange, and other City Staff.

3. Presentations

a. Conservation Easement Options for the Rock Island Wetlands

Nina Strusse of Prairie Rivers Network and member of the Wetlands Taskforce gave background information on the Rock Island Wetlands. She said that by establishing a conservation easement to permanently protect wetlands, it would positively impact the area by reducing flood risks, enhancing water quality, protecting the biodiversity of the land, generating economic and community benefits, and building a Rock Island legacy for future generations. She gave some examples of how wetlands have saved lives and money in other communities.

Ms. Strusse said the task force had formulated two options for establishing a conservation easement. The first option is to work with the Natural Land Institute (NLI), a conservation land trust. Under this option, the City would enter into an agreement with NLI to conduct a baseline assessment of the property and hire a consultant and legal team for review and development of a conservation easement agreement. The City would be required to make a one-time stewardship donation to NLI to cover the annual inspection costs and any potential legal fees. Once the easement is secured, NLI would inspect the property annually while the City would maintain responsibility for the property's care and maintenance. Ms. Strusse said that, although a Wetland Management Plan is not required, it is strongly recommended.

Ms. Strusse said the second option is working with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to register the wetlands as an Illinois land and water reserve. Under this option, the City would enter into an agreement with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC). The INPC's regional biologist would prepare and present a site proposal and a management plan to the INCP for approval and implementation. The INCP would be able to help with some of the site maintenance, and IDNR would annually inspect the area. Ms.

Strusse said the task force recommended the second option. She went over the tentative timeline for the second option and estimated that the Wetland Management Plan would be completed by 2027. She said the task force would get clarity from the IDNR regarding the flexibility of establishing the boundary and what information can be gathered from their annual inspections.

b. Building Code Updates

Community Development Director Miles Brainard explained that the International Code Council (ICC) develops model codes that meet minimum standards globally and releases them in three-year cycles. He added that the City is using the 2015 cycle. He introduced Building Official Jared Irvine. Mr. Irvine described the ten codes the City has adopted historically.

Mr. Brainard said they are proposing to adopt updated versions of the codes. As of January 1, 2025, Illinois requires municipalities with building codes to remain within three code cycles of the current ICC cycle. He said that because neighboring communities adopted the 2021 cycle, staff proposed the adoption of the same cycle. Additionally, two new amendments were also proposed. The first amendment would deem structures unfit for occupancy if the water service is not active. The other amendment adopts the ICC appendix for tiny houses and 3D-printed houses.

Mr. Irvine said the contractor registration requirements would also be updated for consistency and easier comprehension. The registration revocation process would also be clarified. Owner-occupants performing their own renovations would be exempt from registering. Mr. Brainard said that staff also proposed consolidating the language from different parts of the municipal code into a single, new Chapter 4: Building Regulations, which would also include the health code.

Mr. Brainard said the strategic housing plan recommends that the City reevaluate the fire sprinkler system requirement for single- and two-family houses. He provided the following options: keep the requirement, keep the requirement but develop a financial assistance program to help with the costs, adopt Rock Island County's sprinkler exemption, or eliminate the requirement. He stated that all neighboring communities eliminated the requirement except the County. Mr. Irvine explained that the County had a sprinkler exemption that required flooring to be made of slower-burning material than the typical material used in modern homes.

Mr. Irvine explained that Illinois enforces the ICC model code standard for energy conservation while the Stretch Energy Code goes beyond the international standard. Alderperson Parker said he would like to see the City as a leader in energy and asked that the Stretch Energy Code be further explored.

The Council discussed the sprinkler requirement options. Mr. Brainard said the cost and extra effort designing a home with a sprinkler system can delay development. Fire Chief Bob Graff said the average sprinkler is \$2 to \$5 a square foot. Mr. Brainard said staff can contact the County to see if they have data related to the costs of homes built that qualified under the sprinkler exemption.

4. Public Comment

Mayor Harris asked if anyone in the public wished to speak.

Brian Ritter spoke about the proposed conservation easement.

Tony and Joyce Singh spoke about the wetlands.

5. Adjourn

- a. Motion: Motion to adjourn.
VV Voice vote is needed.

MOTION:

Aldersperson Poulos moved to adjourn; Aldersperson Evans seconded.

VOTE:

Motion PASSED on a 5-0-2 voice vote. Aye: Hurt, Barnes, Parker, Poulos, Evans. Nay: None. Absent: Swanson, Healy.

The Study Session concluded at 6:33 p.m.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]