

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

10/9/2023 - Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Pro Tem Healy called the Study Session meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

2. Roll Call

Mayor Pro Tem Bill Healy asked City Clerk Samantha Gange to call the roll.

Present: Mayor Pro Tem Bill Healy, Alderpersons Moses Robinson, Judith Gilbert, Jenni Swanson, Dylan Parker, and Mark Poulos.

Absent: Mayor Mike Thoms and Alderperson Randy Hurt

Staff: Assistant City Manager and Parks and Recreation Director John Gripp, Attorney Leslie Day, City Clerk Samantha Gange, and other City Staff.

3. Public Comment

****Following the second presentation, Ms. Jodie Kavensky of Rock Island offered her public comments, and a summary is listed under item #4b.****

4. Presentations

- a. Presentation from the Public Works Department regarding an update on the Reservoir Domes.

Public Works Director Mike Bartels said the presentation would be an update to the water dome project with assistance from CDM Smith. He introduced Amarou Atassi of CDM Smith, who provided an update on why the project was needed, what has been done, what will be done in the future, and what costs will be involved. Mr. Atassi reviewed the existing potable water storage, noting that the four domes were constructed in 1938, and the failed liner of one caused the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to alert the City to the need for repairs. A subsequent review of all four domes resulted in the project scope.

Mr. Atassi said the results of the dome review showed that none of the other three had a liner, and ultimately, all four are nearing the end of their useful life. He added that the pump station is below grade, and could result in difficulty moving water to residents if it failed. Since the last meeting with Council in December of 2022, CDM Smith has worked with staff to collect data and establish recommendations. He reviewed the

existing water storage options in the City as well as existing water demands. Per their calculations, the City needs 5 million gallons of storage volume based on demands.

Mr. Atassi reviewed the data to determine the needs for sizing up the pumping station. He discussed the recommendations for high service pumps and water domes, suggesting the City build two new water domes with 2.5 million gallon capacities. Once the new domes and pumps are running, they would decommission the older ones. Mr. Atassi said the estimated project cost is currently \$35 million as of October 2023, which is lower than expected, but still higher than originally proposed. He presented a chart of estimated high service pumping energy savings, as well as a list of other savings and benefits that would result from the project. He discussed possible funding options for the project, which include EPA loans, grants related to energy savings, and federal earmarks.

Mr. Atassi discussed the next steps in the process, the first of which is to meet with the EPA to review funding options. Following that, they will review additional funding options including grants. Following funding, they would proceed with a detailed project design. The plan is currently to present an engineering design agreement at one of the December Council meetings. He reviewed the timeline going forward, which includes possible construction dates from Spring 2025 through the Spring of 2027.

Mr. Atassi entertained questions from the Council. Alderperson Robinson stated he was concerned about the timeline to complete the project, and asked if there was a backup plan should there be failures in the meantime. Mr. Atassi replied that CDM Smith and staff are working on an emergency plan to minimize the impact of a failure. Mr. Bartels said there is an emergency plan if the pump station would fail, which consists of a six-to-eight page document. He added that the domes are not a concern at this time, and there should not be any water quality issues. The urgency is currently with the pump station.

Alderperson Gilbert asked for clarification regarding the storage recommendations. Mr. Atassi said they are recommending 5 million gallons of storage in addition to the current 2.85 million gallons of storage. Alderperson Gilbert asked how the City would be able to pay for the \$6 million in design costs. Mr. Atassi noted that the amount would include the design and administration, including resident engineering services. Mr. Bartels replied that the cost will be built into current and future water rate increases.

Alderperson Poulos asked if the build up was related to calcium, and whether or not there was anything the City could do as a remedy. CDM Smith structural engineer Brandon Diffenderfer said City staff had done all of the inspections they could do. Alderperson Poulos asked if there was anything that could be done so that the City did not need to be concerned about a catastrophic failure. Mr. Atassi said if one dome does fail, there are three other domes, and noted that the real urgency lies in the pump station due to the location and hazards. He suggested moving forward with the project as soon as possible to address the pump station. Mr. Bartels noted that the corrosion alluded to by Alderperson Poulos was not uncommon due to the age of the facilities, and it is not harming the quality of the water.

City Utilities Superintendent Jason Upton discussed the risks involved with the problems presented by the domes. He said the challenge of eliminating corrosion is limited by isolating specific tanks, and noted that they have done things to mitigate the possibility of a failure. Alderperson Parker asked if it was redundant to have power to both the pump station and the water filtration facility. He also encouraged electricity to be included in the project scope. Mr. Atassi said that has been considered, and redundancy and backups are a part of the plan in many ways. He said there will always be an option for having connectors for portable generators, and backups will be considered. Mr. Upton described what had been done previously with the water filtration

facility situation Alderperson Parker referenced. Alderperson Parker said he supported the idea of adding consideration for power as part of the project, even if it added cost.

- b. Presentation from the Community & Economic Development Department regarding the Consolidation of Boards and Commissions.

Community and Economic Development (CED) Director Miles Brainard presented on the consolidation of boards and commissions. He discussed what a commission is, noting they are all public advisory or adjudicative bodies subject to the Open Meetings Act (OMA). He said the CED department has discussed the commissions that are managed by the department, including the Arts Commission, Beautification Commission, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), CIRLF Committee, Community Development Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Inspections Commission, and the Planning Commission. He provided background information on each commission, including the purpose and number of members. He noted previously approved changes, including the establishment of the Community Development and Inspections commissions.

Mr. Brainard said staff are proposing the consolidation of the Arts and Beautification Commission in order to shift toward a larger focus on improving efficiency and timeliness. The goal of this commission would be to have members collaborate on efforts to improve livability, and help make the community a more attractive place to live, while also helping make the City competitive in terms of the quality of life offered. Next, he discussed the Planning and Zoning Commission, stating that many cities have combined these two bodies to also improve efficiency and timeliness. This Commission would review plans and serve as an appeals board, as well as help staff develop and evaluate existing programs. This would also help with residents having to attend multiple meetings about their particular issue.

Mr. Brainard noted that Rock Island has more commissions, committees, boards, and task forces than many larger cities. He noted that it is increasingly difficult to find volunteers, and many meetings fail to make quorum. He proposed doing more with less, as the status quo may not be manageable. He noted the effort required to keep these public bodies organized and operating within Open Meetings Act (OMA) regulations for such groups, and asked whether or not the current state of the groups was serving the public and businesses in the best fashion. He said these public bodies should be pipelines for public service talent development. He said the goal for CED is to encourage efficient public bodies with a uniform structure working productively with staff and Council.

Alderperson Poulos asked for clarification on whether or not the proposal would eliminate the BZA. Mr. Brainard discussed what the present scenario would be for an applicant for a variance, and noted that Council had previously delegated decision-making authority to the BZA. He added that procedures will not change for the applicant process, but having one body only to handle an issue instead of two will provide for a more cohesive public body. Alderperson Gilbert said if quorums cannot be met, reducing the number of members should be considered. She noted that the City Code shows that the Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals have two different functions, and she is not in favor of combining them. She requested data on the number of requests received, and a summary of each meeting prior to bringing the consolidation measure to an agenda.

Alderperson Parker applauded Mr. Brainard and CED staff for reviewing policies and establishing standards, processes, and manuals for their department. He encouraged support of the consolidation to alleviate

redundancies and allow staff to utilize their time more effectively. Mr. Brainard clarified that staff is not in favor of reducing investment in public art, historic preservation, or neighborhood beautification efforts. He stated the proposed changes do not reflect a desire to cast those subjects aside. Alderperson Robinson said he is in favor of the proposed changes, as it would help maximize the time spent on the important issues. Mr. Brainard encouraged Council to contact him with any questions.

Alderperson Gilbert noted that public comment was skipped on the agenda, and Mayor Pro Tem Healy called Jodie Kavensky to speak.

Ms. Kavensky said she is a property owner in the City, serving on the Illinois Arts Council Agency and the City's Arts Commission. She said she spoke for many members of the Arts Commission that combining the Arts and Beautification is not the right thing to do. She added that the Arts Commission chairperson has resigned and some other members are planning to follow suit. She opined that combining the two would make their input less forceful and less important, and meetings will take longer. She said the two groups have many differences, and do not fit together. She prefers to keep the Arts Commission as an economic development tool.

5. Adjourn

- a. Motion to Adjourn.

Motion:	Motion whether or not to adjourn.
RC	Voice Vote is needed.

MOTION:

Alderperson Poulos moved to adjourn; Alderperson Swanson seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-0-1 voice vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Healy, Robinson, Gilbert, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: Hurt.

The meeting concluded at 6:36 p.m.

Josh Adams, Deputy City Clerk