

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

12/11/2023 - Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Thoms called the Study Session to order at 6:45 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

2. Roll Call

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

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

Absent: Alderperson Hurt

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

3. Public Comment

No one signed up to speak.

4. Presentations

- a. Presentation from the Public Works Department regarding Street Maintenance Funding.

Public Works Director Mike Bartels explained that the City is facing significant challenges in maintaining its street infrastructure due to underfunding and inconsistent revenue. The decline in revenue, primarily from local gas taxes, has jeopardized the quality of the existing infrastructure. In order to address this financial shortfall and ensure the longevity of Rock Island's streets, there is an urgent need to explore and implement new funding sources. Public Works is recommending the elimination of the local gas tax and the implementation of an Infrastructure Investment Fee.

Public Works Superintendent Luke Vanlandegen explained the street condition survey that was conducted in the fall of 2013. A pavement condition index (PCI) was assigned to every block. Rock Island's average PCI score in 2014 was 62. At the time of the study, Rock Island needed \$7.21 million per year over twenty years to maintain an average PCI score of 62. Rock Island has been averaging around \$1 million per year in proactive street maintenance programs, along with another \$2 to \$3 million in reconstructions/grants and reactive maintenance, such as pothole patching. The City has been short approximately \$3 million per year since 2013.

Mr. Vanlandegen discussed the current funding sources that are used for street maintenance. State Motor Fuel Tax funds are distributed by the State of Illinois. The funding is based on population and has consistently been \$1.6M annually for the City of Rock Island. Approximately \$800,000 is allocated towards capital

improvement, which includes things like street reconstruction, and \$800,000 towards maintenance, which includes things such as crack salting, asphalt mill and fill and concrete patching. Gaming funds are not used for infrastructure. Grants can come from the federal and state level, but it varies significantly and often times requires a local match.

The General Fund is revenue from property taxes. In 2023, \$1.6 million from the General Fund was spent on general street maintenance, for example, pothole patching and snow removal, and includes things such as labor, equipment and materials. The Local Gas Tax provided approximately \$300,000 in revenue in 2023. The gas tax rate has gone from 1 cent per gallon in 2015 to 5 cents per gallon in 2023.

Mr. Vanlandegen talked about how property values are directly related to the quality of infrastructure around it and failing infrastructure lowers home values and reduces property tax revenue. In order to close the infrastructure investment gap, Public Works is proposing an Infrastructure Investment Fee based on parcel size. They are recommending a levy on all parcels in the City of Rock Island. The City has 16,001 parcels and the estimated annual revenue would be \$2,040,640.00. They would eliminate the local gas tax, which would give the residents and businesses a small break.

Mr. Vanlandegen explained the fee structure, which would be progressive based on parcel size. A small parcel would pay \$6.67 per month or \$80.00 annually. A medium parcel would pay \$10.00 per month or \$120.00 annually. A large parcel would pay \$18.33 per month or \$220.00 annually and an extra-large parcel would pay \$25.00 a month or \$300.00 annually. Approximately 84% of all parcels in the City are small or medium. He explained the different types of maintenance techniques.

Mr. Vanlandegen said a host of variables will influence how street maintenance is allocated. Some of those variables include PCI data, drivability, heat maps, proximity to schools and critical services and resident/aldermen complaints. As the streets are improved and updated, the PCI data will be updated. Mr. Bartels noted that most of the work they are proposing is asphalt mill and fill maintenance.

Aldersperson Robinson asked about the maintenance plan. Mr. Bartels said they would like to bring back a ten-year plan that lists all the projects based on the PCI data. He noted that everyone should see a benefit because the money will be spent on streets that all residents use, not just residential streets. Aldersperson Gilbert said the City needs to do a better job educating residents about property taxes and what they go toward. She is happy to see a proposal that finally addresses the problem. Aldersperson Swanson mentioned that her residential street was done around 2011. At that time, she was assessed \$10,000 and had ten years to pay it. She said her lot size is somewhere between small and medium, which under this proposal would be around \$120 a year versus \$1,000 over each of ten years. She understands that people might be frustrated about the extra cost, but she said knowing that the majority of the roads will be fixed and maintained will add value.

Aldersperson Robinson asked if the PCI data included alleys. Mr. Bartels said it does not, but he understands there are a lot of gravel alleys and they will need to be upgraded.

Mayor Thoms said that the current storm water utility rates are based on small, medium and large parcels and that makes sense. He said this is a little different because people drive on all the streets equally. He asked what the thoughts were behind basing it on lot size, instead of one fee for everyone. Mr. Vanlandegen said a larger parcel would have more linear feet touching the road. Mr. Bartels said they looked at a flat fee for everyone, but in looking at the revenue that is needed, it would not work.

Mr. Bartels said the next step is to give a more detailed presentation at an upcoming City Council meeting.

- b. Presentation from the Fire Department regarding a revision to the Recreational Fires and Open Burning Ordinance.

Fire Chief Bob Graff presented the proposed changes to the recreational fires and open burning ordinance. The purpose of the changes is to modify the language to reflect the adopted fire code, clarify the authority to extinguish nuisance fires, codify the authority to enforce a burn ban and to establish a legal time-frame for recreational fires.

Chief Graff explained the 2015 International Fire Code Section 307, Open Burning, Recreational Fires and Portable Outdoor Fireplaces and revisions to Section 10-40.2, When Open Burning Permitted. This section has been revised to now require a permit from IL EPA and the site will be reviewed and approved by the City of Rock Island Fire Marshal. The new section, Section 10-40.3 Recreational Fires, establishes a time frame and age responsibility. The hours for recreational burning would be from 7 am to 11 pm. The new section also establishes authority for a burn ban, the authority for the fire department to order the extinguishment of fires creating nuisance conditions, and approved materials for burning. They added a section that establishes a minimum fine of \$75 for violation of Section 10-40.3. Chief Graff noted the number of calls they receive regarding recreational fire violations has dramatically decreased over the years.

5. Adjourn

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

Aldersperson Poulos moved to adjourn the Study Session; Aldersperson Parker seconded.

VOTE:

Motion PASSED on a 7-0 voice vote. Aye: Poulos, Healy, Hurt, Gilbert, Swanson, Parker, Robinson. Nay: None.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Colleen Skolrood, Executive Assistant.