

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

6/12/2023 - Minutes

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**2. Roll Call**

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

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

Absent: Randy Hurt.

Staff: City Manager Todd Thompson, Attorney Dave Morrison, City Clerk Samantha Gange, and other City Staff.

**3. Public Comment**

Mayor Thoms asked if anyone in the public wished to speak. No residents volunteered.

**4. Presentations**

a. City of Rock Island Communications & Community Engagement Plan

Community Engagement Manager Sarah Hayden approached the podium to present the City's Communications and Community Engagement Plan. She provided an overview and discussed the progress that has been made since the position was created in August 2022, including social media and standard media engagement statistics. She said it is important to have a full-time person to push out a positive narrative for stories. She communicated the City's progress regarding certain projects, including progress with gaining followers to social media pages. She encouraged Council members to have Ward meetings to communicate with the public, noting Alderperson Gilbert's upcoming meeting on June 19. As a former member of the media herself, she feels it has been beneficial to have direct contact with nearly every reporter and editor of local media.

Alderperson Robinson asked how many residents have been contacted that do not have social media or other means of electronic access. Ms. Hayden said there is contact outside of social media, but it is minimal, and the bulk of contact is done through Facebook. Alderperson Gilbert said there needs to be some connectivity for

those that are not on social media, via a link on the City's webpage or app. Ms. Hayden said there is pending new software that allows users to click and submit a question to the City. Alderperson Robinson noted that the City is still behind the curve if a large portion of the population is not contacted via means other than social media. City Manager Thompson referenced page 16 of the plan, which indicates a goal to identify non-traditional methods to connect with residents. Ms. Hayden said she has discussed this with Mr. Thompson to ensure the City is communicating with everyone. Alderperson Swanson asked if the water bill could be utilized to communicate information to residents. Finance Director Linda Barnes responded affirmatively and said Public Works has utilized this in the past.

Ms. Hayden continued her presentation, providing an overview and purpose of the communication plan and referenced City Council goals, noting she would update the plan accordingly after the presentation and receipt of feedback from Council. She discussed the nineteen goals related to the Communication Plan. She pointed to the importance of having a good relationship with local media, as the better the relationship, the better reach for the City. She noted the City's continued relationship with the local school district, and discussed her interactions with local media outlets and the results of that correspondence. She noted improvements with internal City communications amongst various departments, as well as activity updates from department directors sent to Council. She discussed involvement in attendance at business openings and other City events, as well as featuring them on the City's social media accounts. She noted the potential internship program through the Public Works Department and the local school district, as well as the pending City resident survey. Also noted was the monthly Operations Report distributed to Council that discusses what has been accomplished. She highlighted the target audience, tools of communication, media relations, public opinion surveys, and City logo included in the plan.

Alderperson Gilbert remarked she was glad to hear Ms. Hayden will be working on updating the City website. She asked if there was an option to add a press room tab that would highlight interviews, press releases, and pictures. Ms. Hayden said she welcomed the feedback and would look into that option. Alderperson Gilbert said there were many good ideas and themes received from residents amongst the many responses to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) survey, and asked to have staff pay attention to what was suggested. She suggested reformatting the Monthly Operations Report. Ms. Hayden said she would work with Council to get feedback. Mr. Thompson invited all Council members to provide feedback for the Operations Report so it could be tailored to the desired information.

Alderperson Robinson suggested an employee portal to highlight announcements and other employee milestones or accomplishments. He suggested having consistency with Unplugged and other events with regards to how information is released. He asked if Ms. Hayden could provide specific examples of how to reach populations that do not use technology or electronics, and if there is a designated number for nuisance complaints. Ms. Hayden said the aforementioned 3-1-1 platform is being developed for residents to click and complain about an issue. Alderperson Parker said he liked the idea of the pending resident survey, as it better measures transparency and public satisfaction. He said it is instrumental to get a baseline measurement on how to improve. He said he is intrigued by goal number 14 regarding an annual report summarizing city-wide accomplishments, and wished to highlight the connections with existing reports and aligning resources. He noted the strategic plan and budget, which includes Key Performance Indicators (KPI) along with a plethora of data from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), as well as the monthly operations report. He asked how to point all of this material and formalize it into an annual report, such as what is being measured, how it will be reported, and how it will align with the planning and execution process. He said CDBG has a specific plan that is required, which specifies how the public should be involved, and how it should align with that plan.

Alderson Poulos said the annual report should be brief, as people value their time, and the City should be mindful and respectful of how information is presented. He said more people are likely to read materials that are brief in nature. In response to a question from Mayor Thoms regarding the purpose of targeted citizen surveys, Mr. Thompson and Ms. Hayden said there are various survey methodologies, and it will represent a random sample of residents. Mayor Thoms remarked on the website update, suggesting it would be helpful if information would be presented in a simple manner, such as a pie chart or other visual that connects residents. Alderson Swanson suggested utilizing community partners such as Project Now and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for assistance with citizen communication. Alderson Robinson suggested utilizing churches as an additional avenue of communication. Alderson Healy suggested providing short videos on how certain elements of the City function, as well as working with interns to help communicate with the public.

**5. Adjourn**

- a. Motion to Adjourn.

|         |                                   |
|---------|-----------------------------------|
| Motion: | Motion whether or not to adjourn. |
| RC      | Roll Call vote is needed.         |

MOTION:

Alderson Healy moved to Adjourn; Alderson Poulos seconded.

VOTE:

Motion PASSED on a 6-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Robinson, Gilbert, Swanson, Parker, Poulos, Healy. Nay: None. Absent: Hurt.

The meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Josh Adams, Deputy City Clerk