

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE
COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JASPER, INDIANA
January 17, 2024**

A regular meeting of the Common Council of the City of Jasper, Indiana, was held on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 610 Main Street, Jasper, Indiana.

Call to Order. Presiding Officer Mayor Dean Vonderheide called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Roll Call. Clerk Treasurer Kiersten Knies called the roll.

	<u>In Person</u>	<u>Video</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Mayor Dean Vonderheide	X		
Council members:			
John Schroeder	X		
Chad Lueken	X		
Vince Helming	X		
Paul Lorey	X		
Kevin Manley	X		
Nancy Eckerle	X		
Philip Mundy	X		
City Attorney Renee Kabrick	X		
Clerk-Treasurer Kiersten Knies	X		

Knies announced that in order to have a quorum for the meeting, a majority of the council members must be in attendance. All of the council members were in attendance at the beginning of the meeting, which is a majority; therefore, there was a quorum for the meeting.

Moment of Personal Reflection. Mayor Vonderheide asked that all present take a moment for personal reflection.

Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Vonderheide invited all those present to join him in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the Minutes. The minutes from Regular Council Meeting December 20, 2023, were distributed to and examined by the Council. A motion was made by Council member Kevin Manley and seconded by Council member John Schroeder to approve the minutes from December 20, 2023, without corrections. Motion carried 7-0.

Welcome to the Council. Mayor Dean Vonderheide and the other members of the Common Council congratulated Vince Helming on his election win and welcomed him to the Council.

State of the City Presentation. Mayor Dean Vonderheide presented the annual State of the City Presentation. He reviewed the city's ending fund balances and unencumbered balances. He reviewed the Heart of Jasper Main Street Program. They have been a key component of the downtown merchants and the Chamber of Commerce. Mayor pointed out that Jasper is the only municipality in the State of Indiana that has INSHARP Certification. The city has 375 total employees including seasonal. The average years of service are coming down due to retirements. Employees nearing retirement are working with INPRS on their retirement plans to know what is available to them. The wellness program has allowed the city to avoid raising the cost of insurance to employees for the last five years. The Indiana Office of Technology has requested that municipalities meet certain standards, and the City of Jasper was one of the first ones to sign up to meet those cyber ready standards. The city's turnover rate is extremely low in part because the Personnel Department takes care to help find the right candidate for positions. Jerry Schitter of the Electric Department and Scott Eckerle of the Street Department retired. Darla Blazey left voluntarily for another opportunity. Stan Seifert, Matt Kiefer, and Josh Gunselman were appointed to fill these positions. They have come in strong as leaders and are leading their departments well. The city participates in the Career Cruise held at Jasper High School and shows students opportunities within the city for employment, specifically with the Park Department, the Arts Department, the Fire Department, and the Police Department. Other departments are encouraged to

participate. An endowment was established for the four gathering spaces downtown and the maintenance of the new revitalized square. That endowment is something the city is going to continue with other projects to make sure that the funding is available to keep our projects in top notch condition. The city was awarded the Uplands Quality of Place Attraction Award. The city issued 320 permits in 2023 and had close to the same amount of dollars invested from those permits as the prior year. Twenty mobile food trucks were permitted, as well as fifty-one signs, fifty-seven fences and twenty-three pools. Director Gunselman's experience with the BZA has proven extremely helpful. The city was involved with the establishment of the ALASI Community Center, which is critical to the community by helping immigrants find the resources they need within the community. The Jasper Outdoor Refreshment Area was established. Other communities are looking to Jasper to establish theirs. The Utility Departments have a lot going on with several retirements in several different departments. The new hires brought on in the Water Department are now certified Water Operators. The Utilities Office has been hit with several retirements, two last year and two right away beginning this year. But they continue to do a great job in managing over \$44 million in sales, though bad debt was slightly higher due to one specific incident, small claims collected more. The Wastewater Department had less rain for the year which equated to treating eighty million gallons less of water. There has been a lot of work done in order to improve stormwater laterals. They were called to inspect 417 laterals and had only seventy-five failures. Again, wastewater is facing several retirements in the near future. The Gas and Water Department evaluated more drinking water samples and processed fifty-three million more gallons of water in the filtration plant. Water usage is up considerably. There continues to be fewer main breaks needing fixed as the old infrastructure is replaced. They have done an excellent job of requiring the new employees to get their certifications right away. Stan Seifert took over Jerry Schitter's roll and has been promoting a new substation on the North side as part of resiliency for utilities. Plans are being reviewed with the help of IMPA and consultants. The AMI project is about half complete. The Police Department had a number of individuals interested in Sgt Adam Bower's position. The force is young and eager to grow and develop. They are doing a lot in today's world to respond to the needs of the community and those that are passing through. There was an increase in the number of citations written and warnings. The number of arrests was up as well though there was a reduction in the number of drug arrests. Former Officer John Fleck and Daniel Moore came on as Part Time Dispatchers. The Fire Department Volunteers are the heart and soul of public safety, and they are to be commended for their commitment to the residents of the community. They all have other full-time jobs but continue to serve the public all hours of the day 365 days a year. Chief Hochgesang and his Assistant Chiefs have compiled an asset management plan to share with other departments and the council. This is key to understanding the city's needs. There was a lot going on in the Park Department. Buffalo Trace has come a long way. There were over 25,000 rounds played there in 2023. The new driving range will be opening this spring. Pickle Ball Courts were installed at Buehler Park. Ruxer golf course was turned into an 18-hole disc golf course with over 1,162 rounds played and registered on the app. Key fobs were installed at all the park facilities for the safety of residents. The City Mill experienced an unexpected expense with the wheel repair. The Arts Department rentals were up, their activities were up and the number of people coming through was higher than the previous years. Programming improvements have been made and a full-time coordinator for school programming and art activities was brought on. The Thyen Clark Cultural Center is open 343 days out of the year. The auditorium entrance was enhanced, and restrooms were added. The Street Department continues to get accolades from the community because of all they do to keep the city clean. They have applied for and been awarded several Community Crossing Grants, meaning for every dollar they spend on these projects they get another dollar from the state. This has assisted in the improvement of the infrastructure in the city. The Mayor's Youth Leadership Council is working on the development of nonverbal communication boards across eight city parks. These boards will be in English and Spanish. There are twenty-one students on the MYLC. They do all their own fundraising and do a great job of making projects happen. The main projects for 2024 are the Downtown Revitalization Phase II, the Northside sewer district, a backup water supply, the multiuse trail expansion, and the new outdoor aquatic center. The Regional Wellness Center plans continue to gain momentum and have gotten a lot of community support. There are several housing projects being planned as well as the 15th Street Extension. Additionally with the HELP Grant, the city in collaboration with Dubois County is offering an Owner-Occupied Housing program to help residents whose homes need specific improvements. Let's get on with 2024.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statements. Clerk Treasurer Kiersten Knies requested Council approval of two Uniform Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statements, one for Paul Lorey who is a Council Member and employed with Hopf Equipment and Bud Hauersperger who is the General Manager of Utilities and sits on the Board of Directors for IMPA.

A motion was made by Nancy Eckerle and seconded by Chad Lueken to approve both Uniform Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statements. Motion carried 6-0, with Paul Lorey abstaining.

Encumbrances. Clerk Treasurer Kiersten Knies presented the previously distributed list of encumbrances totaling \$4,744,179.96.

A motion was made by John Schroeder and seconded by Kevin Manley to approve the list of 2024 encumbrances. Motion carried 7-0.

President Pro-Tempore 2024. John Schroeder made a motion to appoint Kevin Manley as President Pro-Tempore. Council member Kevin Manley declined the appointment. Thereafter a motion was made by Nancy Eckerle and seconded by Paul Lorey to appoint Phil Mundy as Council President Pro-Tempore for 2024. Motion carried 7-0. The council thanked Kevin Manley for his service as President Pro-Tempore over the past several years.

Contractual Services Funds. Mayor Vonderheide requested permission to use the Common Council Contractual Service Funds for appraisals of the EH Hamilton Property.

A motion was made by Kevin Manley and seconded by Paul Lorey approving the use of the council's contractual services funds for the EH Hamilton Property Appraisals. Clerk Treasurer noted there is money appropriated for contractual services that should cover this cost as well as money in the appraisals line. City Attorney Kabrick advised that they had received two estimates, one for \$2500 and one for \$3500. The request is to use what is in the appraisals line and then pay the remainder from the contractual services line. Motion carried 7-0.

Ordinance No. 2024-1

An Ordinance Establishing a Fund for the Repair and Maintenance of the City Owned Assets Located in and around the Heart of Jasper District

City Attorney Renee Kabrick read the purpose of the Ordinance because there had been some discussion surrounding that section. A motion was made by Paul Lorey and seconded by Kevin Manley to read the ordinance by title only on the first reading. Motion carried 7-0.

City Attorney Renee Kabrick so read Ordinance No. 2024-1 by title only.

Thereafter, a motion was made by Paul Lorey and seconded by Nancy Eckerle to approve Ordinance No. 2024-1 on the first reading striking the word development from section 3, leaving it for improvement or repair. Motion carried 7-0.

Dubois County Community Foundation Endowment Discussion. Mayor Vonderheide advised there is a new fund being established within the Dubois County Community Foundation for an endowment to go towards these projects. Council member Manley noted that all the ROJAC projects have been funded through membership and all those projects are being completed and they are consolidating with the Heart of Jasper. However, there was not a maintenance fund for those items back in the day and ROJAC is attempting to correct this issue before turning things over to the Heart of Jasper. The endowment is in place now. Tourism has committed \$20,000.00 to the endowment. Manley proposed the council put \$100,000.00 of Riverboat Funds to kick start the endowment. ROJAC will prepare a letter explaining the plan and asking the membership that has supported them all these years for their support in the endowment. Manley feels that if we are going to ask the community to support the endowment, the city should support it as well. The ROJAC board is behind this, and the Community Foundation agrees to help through their donor base as well. The endowment is guaranteed to generate 4% per year beginning the second year. Clerk Treasurer Kiersten Knies pointed out that only the city's gaming funds can be used towards an endowment. No other city funds can be used for this purpose. Council member Chad Lueken suggested using matching funds so that any funds up to \$100,000.00 would be matched by the City of Jasper.

Resolution No. 2024-1

A Resolution Authorizing Transfer of Interest in Real Estate

This resolution transfers the Power Plant property to the Jasper Redevelopment Commission. City Attorney Renee Kabrick advised that additional information was just presented this morning at a meeting so that while this is still certainly a possibility more time is needed to investigate whether this is the highest and best use of that property. Mayor Vonderheide noted that there were a lot of details received this morning regarding this property that they have not had time to digest. Atty Kabrick noted that for some time the city has been looking at the property for dense multifamily development. It has gone through the environmental investigation stage and a site status letter was received from IDEM setting out what can and cannot be done on that property. The city is in the early stages of platting the site and developing a soil management plan. However,

the idea was presented to look at the property for internal use. The property is just under seven acres with the parking lot being carved out for the Riverwalk.

Opioid Funds. Council member Nancy Eckerle suggested the Council keep the funds and use the Substance Abuse Council as a grant keeper. Clerk Treasurer Knies advised in speaking with the County that this was the only way this could be done because the city cannot just give the substance abuse council their funds due to strict usage and reporting requirements.

Chamber Breakfast. Council member Nancy Eckerle advised that the Chamber Legislative Breakfast would be held this Saturday from 9:00 am to 10:30 am at VUJC. Senator Mark Messmer and Representative Shane Lindauer would be there to give an update on what is going on at the State level.

S&P Rating. City Attorney Renee Kabrick advised that the city did receive their S&P Bond rating of AA- which is considered particularly good and congratulated everyone who has worked so hard over the years for the financial strength of the city.

Additional Information. Council member Nancy Eckerle thanked the Personnel Department for the handout for Council Orientation and thanked Mayor Vonderheide for bringing in Michael Hicks and David Terrell.

Mayor Vonderheide advised the council at the next BPWS meeting that two employees will be recognized for their life saving heroism and invited the council to attend.

Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Council member Kevin Manley and seconded by Vince Helming to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried 7-0 and the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

The minutes were hereby approved ____ with 2 without corrections or clarification this 21st day of February 2024.



Mayor Dean Vonderheide, Presiding Officer

Attest: 

Kiersten Knies, Clerk-Treasurer