

CITY OF VERONA
MINUTES
COMMON COUNCIL
April 27, 2020
Verona City Hall

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Verona Common Council held its meeting as a virtual meeting. The Common Council did not meet at City Hall, 111 Lincoln Street. Members of the Common Council and Staff joined the meeting by using Zoom Webinar. Members of the public were able to join the meeting using Zoom Webinar via a computer, tablet, or smartphone, or by calling into the meeting via phone.

1. Mayor Diaz called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.
2. Roll call: Alderpersons Kate Cronin, Charlotte Jerney, Chad Kemp, Katie Kohl, Christine Posey, Heather Reekie and Evan Touchett were present. Also present: City Administrator Adam Sayre; City Engineer Carla Fischer; and City Clerk Ellen Clark.
3. Public Comment: None
4. Approval of the minutes from the April 13, 2020 Common Council meeting and April 21, 2020 Common Council Organizational meeting. Motion by Reekie, seconded by Kohl, to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2020 Common Council meeting and April 21, 2020 Common Council Organizational meeting. Motion carried 7-0.
5. Mayor's Business:
 - A. Consideration of candidates for District 2 Alderperson vacancy

Dennis Beres stated he is familiar with many of the City development issues, and thinks he would be able make a quick start. He spent 15 years on the local school board, and is involved with the business community and other civic groups. He does not intend to run for this office at the end of the term. He feels the Sugar Creek Elementary School project affords the Council a great opportunity to shape the community. It is important to have a balance between new residential offerings and a park area. He is not in favor of a swimming pool being part of the project. He would like to see common sense used, and a lot of community input throughout the project. He believes the Council can help to bring viable businesses to the City to fill existing spaces, as well as promote new construction. He also believes the lines of communication should stay open between businesses and city hall.

Charlie Ryan stated he worked in a broad range of social services positions around the world for approximately 20 years. He feels highly invested in the community and its continued success. He has experience working with community groups, businesses, and all levels of government. For Verona, he would like to see a more vibrant downtown area, more affordable housing options, and a stronger sense of safety and security for Verona residents. He believes the people working in local businesses should be able to afford to live in the community, as well. He also feels it

is important to work with developers and work groups to provide a wide range of housing options, including 3-bedroom multi-family units. Charlie recently prepared a survey of Verona residents using the “Next Door” application, and received approximately 140 responses.

B. Arbor Day Proclamation

Mayor Diaz read the 2020 Arbor Day Proclamation and declared April 27, 2020 as Arbor Day in the City of Verona.

C. Council member committee appointments

Mayor Diaz recommended the following Council member committee and commission appointments:

Economic Development Commission:

Chad Kemp – Finance Committee Chair – 1 year term expiring May 2021

Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission:

Charlotte Jerney – 1 year term expiring May 2021

Heather Reekie – 1 year term expiring May 2021

Cemetery Board:

Evan Touchett – Public Works/Sewer and Water Committee Chair – 1 year term expiring May 2021

Brian Lamers – Finance Director – 1 year term expiring May 2021

David Walker – Parks Director – 1 year term expiring May 2021

Tourism Commission:

Charlotte Jerney – 1 year term expiring May 2021

City/Town Joint Planning Committee:

Katie Kohl – completing the 2 year term vacated by Sarah Gaskell expiring May 2021

Motion by Touchett, seconded by Kohl, to approve the Council member committee and commission appointments as recommended by Mayor Diaz. Motion carried 7-0.

D. Citizen member committee appointments

Mayor Diaz recommended the following citizen committee and commission appointments:

Community Development Authority:

Brett Polglaze – 4 year term expiring May 2024

Economic Development Commission:

Sean Cleary – 1 year term expiring May 2021

Fitch-Rona EMS District:

Gregg Miller – 2 year term expiring May 2022

Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission:

Tyler Powers, Chair – 1 year term expiring May 2021

Plan Commission:

Tyler Powers – 1 year term expiring May 2021
Mike Hankard – 3 year term expiring May 2023

Police and Fire Commission:

Melissa Helgesen – 5 year term expiring 2025

Zoning Board of Appeals:

Brett Petta – 3 year term expiring May 2023

Cemetery Board:

Art Cresson – 3 year term expiring May 2023

Tourism Commission:

Charlie Eggen (Hotel Rep) – 1 year term expiring May 2021
Jason Hunt (Citizen), Chair – 1 year term expiring May 2021
Sara Hoechst (Citizen) – 1 year term expiring May 2021
Patricia Wehrley (Citizen) – 1 year term expiring May 2021

Additional appointments for vacant seats will be made at a later date.

Motion by Touchett, seconded by Kemp, to approve the citizen member committee and commission appointments as recommended by Mayor Diaz. Motion carried 7-0.

6. Announcements:

- Clark reported that the Board of Review will meet to adjourn on May 11, 2020 before the regular Common Council meeting.

7. Administrator’s Report:

- The Verona Public Library has started curbside pickup.
- The City’s revaluation is ongoing. This is an exterior inspection only.
- Sugar Creek Elementary School RFPs were due today. Six proposals were received. Diaz asked Sayre to clarify why the City is doing this revaluation now.

Sayre replied the homes in the City are currently assessed at approximately 81% of fair market value, which is below the threshold set by the state. This process was started well before COVID-19, and since then, assessors were exempted from the Safer at Home order by the Governor as an essential service. It would cost the City a great deal of money, should we start this process over. In addition, if we do not have the revaluation done on our own, the state will have it done, and will charge us.

8. Engineer’s Report:

- Well 6 Pumping Station Construction: The well and pump equipment have been installed an interior mechanical piping is being installed now. The interior is being prepared for painting the week of April 27th. Due to COVID-19 protocols, the Final Completion date will be pushed to August 31st.
- Verona Area High School Construction Traffic Improvements: Inside lanes are closed for a few weeks; then lane closures will be shifted to the outside lanes. West End Circle traffic will remain in the current location, with asphalt paving planned for the

week of May 4th, and traffic switched to stage 2 location after paving. Road base placement has begun on Wildcat Way, and curb and gutter placement is planned in the upcoming weeks. Work on the Military Ridge State Trail is complete and the trail is open.

- CTH PD Construction – Woods Road to CTH M: Road work has resumed. During the first half of May, the contractor is scheduled to pave the binder lift of the future east bound lanes and install the temporary traffic control items and paint.
- Liberty Park Phase 4 Construction: Storm sewer on Ambition Street has been installed, and the contractor has shifted to street grading on the Liberty Drive extension and Ambition Street. Work on Whalen Road will follow.

9. Committee Reports

A. Plan Commission

- (1) Discussion and Possible Action Re: PUBLIC HEARING on petition/Resolution No. R-20-012 to vacate and discontinue portions of Northern Lights Road and Cross Country Road. Motion by Touchett, seconded by Kohl, to open the public hearing at 7:52 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.

Sayre stated no written comments or requests to be heard at tonight's public hearing were received from the public.

Motion by Touchett, seconded by Kemp, to close the public hearing at 7:53 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.

Sayre explained a public hearing is required when a roadway is discontinued. The Common Council approved introducing this Resolution at the March 9, 2020 Common Council meeting. The Resolution is to discontinue portions of Northern Lights Road and Cross Country Road as part of the Epic 2 Plat. Notice of the discontinuance was provided to adjacent property owners. No comments from the public regarding the discontinuance have been received.

- (2) Discussion and Possible Action Re: Resolution No. R-20-012 discontinuing portions of Northern Lights Road and Cross Country Road pursuant to Wis. Stat. §66.1003. Motion by Kohl, seconded by Cronin, to approve Resolution No. R-20-012 discontinuing portions of Northern Lights Road and Cross Country Road pursuant to Wis. Stat. §66.1003. On roll call: Alder Cronin – Aye; Alder Jerney – Aye; Alder Kemp – Aye; Alder Kohl – Aye; Alder Posey – Aye; Alder Reekie – Aye; Alder Touchett – Aye. Motion carried 7-0.

- (3) Discussion and Possible Action Re: Quit claim between the City of Verona and Epic Systems Corporation. Motion by Kohl, seconded by Reekie, to approve a quit claim between the City of Verona and Epic Systems Corporation. The quit claim deed will transfer land between the City of Verona and Epic Systems Corporation, and will clean up any property line discrepancies prior to Epic recording the new plat for their property. On roll call: Alder Touchett – Aye; Alder Cronin – Aye; Alder Jerney – Aye; Alder Kemp – Aye; Alder Kohl – Aye; Alder Posey – Aye; Alder Reekie – Aye. Motion carried 7-0.

(4) Discussion and Possible Action Re: Resolution No. R-20-016 approving a lease agreement between the City of Verona and Epic Systems Corporation. Motion by Kohl, seconded by Reekie, to approve a lease agreement between the City of Verona and Epic Systems Corporation, subject to final review by the City Administrator and City Attorney. This lease relates to the existing parking ramp tunnels in Northern Lights Road. The lease establishes the terms, conditions and expectations for the use and maintenance of these areas that are located within road right-of-way. On roll call: Alder Reekie – Aye; Alder Touchett – Aye; Alder Cronin – Aye; Alder Jerney – Aye; Alder Kemp – Aye; Alder Kohl – Aye; Alder Posey – Aye. Motion carried 7-0.

10. New Business

A. Discussion and Possible Action Re: Payment of bills. Motion by Kemp, seconded by Cronin, to pay the bills in the amount of \$692,519. 84. On roll call: Alder Posey – Aye; Alder Reekie – Aye; Alder Touchett – Aye; Alder Cronin – Aye; Alder Jerney – Aye; Alder Kemp – Aye; Alder Kohl – Aye. Motion carried 7-0.

B. Discussion and Possible Action Re: Small Business COVID-19 Support Program. Sayre explained this program would provide \$1,000 to \$5,000 grants to eligible small businesses. The goal of the program is to provide funds to help local businesses survive the COVID-19 pandemic. The \$200,000 available for this program will utilize underutilized money from the City's Revolving Loan Fund. To be eligible for the grant program, businesses must meet the following criteria:

- Experienced substantial financial impact due to COVID-19.
- Existing for-profit business in the City of Verona has a bricks and mortar presence.
- Employ 25 or fewer full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.
- Established business for at least six (6) months (opened on or before September 15, 2019).
- Managed a profitable business operation in 2019.
- If a local franchisee, your small business does not have access to franchisor financial support.
- The Business is not delinquent as it relates to City of Verona property taxes, personal property taxes, fees, special assessments, etc.
- Less than \$1 million in revenue in 2019.
- Demonstrate at least a 25% reduction in revenues attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eligible expenses for the grant program include payroll, utility expenses, and lease/mortgage payments if the expense occurred March 1, 2020 or later. Ineligible expenses include construction related capital improvements; signage or advertising; past due leases, loan or utility payments; uniforms; other items of sufficient stock existing prior to the Governor's Safer at Home order. If approved, Staff will start taking applications immediately until May 5th. Grants will be awarded after May 5th and the grant amounts will be dependent on the number of applications and requests.

Comments from businesses include appreciation to the City for offering this grant program. There is concern on the part of businesses that relocated, and therefore were not profitable in 2019, as well as concern from a business that has been located in Verona for less than six months. Other comments include expanding the eligible expenses to include credit card payments for expenses incurred pre-COVID-19, and that the program will be limited to only certain businesses due to the criteria.

Council members were generally in favor of the grant program, and expressed a desire to help local businesses that are hurting due to COVID-19. Discussion followed regarding loosening the eligibility criteria to include businesses that have not been in Verona for at least six months or turned a profit in 2019; ensuring that any credit card bills paid with grant money are for business-related expenses only; requesting information from applicants regarding additional support money they may have received from other sources; extending the application deadline; waiting to see how many applications are received before possibly loosening eligibility criteria; being careful not to give out all the money at once, leaving nothing for a business that may need some help later; paring down grant amounts if more than \$200,000 in grant requests are received; and basing grants and/or loans on revenue levels.

Motion by Reekie, seconded by Kemp, to approve the Small Business COVID-19 Support Program as written.

Sayre stated amendments can be made to the motion.

Reekie requested changing the motion to delete the criteria that the business be established for at least six (6) months (opened on or before September 15, 2019), and that the applicant managed a profitable business operation in 2019.

Cronin asked to add, under Ineligible Expenses, that expenses incurred before March 1, 2020 are ineligible expenses; and add eligibility criteria regarding other financial support for which the applicant has applied or is in the process of receiving.

Sayre stated including the amount of other financial support the applicant may receive moves the burden of making a decision about where the threshold will lie in terms of how much additional support the applicant may be receiving.

Posey asked to add to the motion the criteria that the business was established by February 1, 2020. She would also like to change 2019 profitability from a criterion to a question as part of the application.

Touchett does not want to loosen the criteria too much at this time. He would like to leave the criteria as is until Staff sees how many businesses apply. If too many businesses find they are ineligible, we can loosen the criteria at that time.

Kemp believes the policy should be adopted as written.

Motion by Cronin, seconded by Kohl, to amend the motion on the floor to remove the applicant eligibility criterion that a business must have been established for at least six (6) months (opened on or before September 15, 2019). On roll call: Alder Reekie – Aye; Alder Touchett – No; Alder Cronin – Aye; Alder Jerney – Aye; Alder

Kemp – No; Alder Kohl – Aye; Alder Posey – No. Motion carried 4-3, with Alders Touchett, Kemp and Posey voting No.

Mayor Diaz asked for a roll call vote on the original motion made by Reekie, and seconded by Kemp, to approve the Small Business COVID-19 Support Program as written, with an amendment to remove the applicant eligibility criterion that a business must have been established for at least six (6) months (opened on or before September 15, 2019). On roll call: Alder Touchett – Aye; Alder Cronin – Aye; Alder Jerney – Aye; Alder Kemp – Aye; Alder Kohl – Aye; Alder Posey – Aye; Alder Reekie – Aye. Motion carried 7-0.

- C. Discussion and Possible Action Re: Ordinance No. 20-965 creating Section 2-4-8(g) of the Code of Ordinances relating to the City of Verona Small Business COVID-19 Support Program. This Ordinance allows the City to adopt the City of Verona Small Business COVID-19 Support Program. Motion by Touchett, seconded by Posey, to approve Ordinance No. 20-965 creating Section 2-4-8(g) of the Code of Ordinances relating to the City of Verona Small Business COVID-19 Support Program. On roll call: Alder Cronin – Aye; Alder Jerney – Aye; Alder Kemp – Aye; Alder Kohl – Aye; Alder Posey – Aye; Alder Reekie – Aye; Alder Touchett – Aye. Motion carried 7-0.

- D. Discussion and Possible Action Re: 2020 Fall elections.

Diaz stated we are not sure how long COVID-19 pandemic will continue and restrictions will be in place. He asked to discuss ways to reduce crowding at the polls, to encourage absentee voting, and to allow people to vote without concern for their health. He asked the Council for feedback regarding the possibility of mailing absentee ballot applications to the City's registered voters, as well as any other ideas they may have regarding creating a safe voting experience.

Touchett asked for a description of the current process for obtaining an absentee ballot, the percentage of people that voted absentee versus in person for the April 7, 2020 election, and how those percentages compare to previous elections.

Clark replied approximately 80% of voters voted absentee for the April 7, 2020 election. She stated that voting absentee is more expensive to the City because of the postage and Staff time involved. Sending out requests for absentee ballots to all registered voters is difficult because there will always be a number of people that have moved and not re-registered, so there will be a lot of returned mail. In addition, processing paper is time consuming and involves manual data entry, which can result in human error. It may be more advantageous to work hard to encourage people to request absentee ballots through the MyVote.com website, and to make it easier for people to do so, while still staying within the confines of state law. Approximately 5,200 people voted in total, with approximately 4,300 voting absentee. That comes to just over 80% voting absentee. Total voter turnout in April was approximately 200 fewer than the number that voted in the 2016 spring election.

Touchett stated this goes to show that most people know how to vote absentee. He believes it is important to train and remind people how to vote absentee, and to give

them as much opportunity to do so as possible to do so. Voting absentee seems like a safe way to vote, and will help keep the crowds down on Election Day. He is comfortable with the added expense of mailing out absentee ballots, but is not in favor of mailing absentee ballot request applications at this time.

Cronin asked if there are any State Statutes that prohibit us from holding an election entirely by mail.

Diaz replied he believes in-person voting on Election Day would be required.

Cronin asked if offering early in-person absentee voting will be offered again for those people that are unable to scan and upload their photo IDs.

Clark replied that can and will be offered, if restrictions are loosened or lifted. We have several election inspectors that are able to help with this.

Kohl asked if information regarding absentee voting can be included with the quarterly utility bills.

Clark replied this was discussed with the utility department prior to the April election, however, the last utility billing was not mailed until March 30th, making it too late to include absentee voting information with those bills. In addition, a newsletter is now included with utility bills.

Jerney asked that Staff continue to talk about this and increase public awareness as much as possible.

11. Adjournment:

Motion by Touchett, seconded by Kemp, to adjourn at 9:18 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.

Ellen Clark
City Clerk