

CITY OF SOUTH BELOIT
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
August 5, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: 5:00 pm, Council Chambers, City Hall by Mayor Fitzgerald

ROLL CALL: Present & answering to roll call were Commissioners Adleman, Hedrington, Morse, Prentice, and Mayor Fitzgerald.
City Attorney Roxanne Sosnowski was present
City Administrator Sonya Hoppes was present
City Clerk Tracy Patrick recorded the minutes
Department Heads in attendance:
Wastewater Superintendent Jeff Reininger
Police Sergeant Dan Roggenbuck
Street Superintendent Steve Haas
Community Development Director Shawna Henthorn

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Mayor Fitzgerald and recited by all members present.

INVOCATION: City Clerk, Tracy Patrick delivered the invocation.

APPROVE AGENDA: Commissioner Adleman made a motion to approve the agenda removing Executive Session until the August 19, 2024 Regular Council Meeting. Commissioner Morse second the motion. Voice vote carried the motion.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Jim Helsell spoke about his Code Enforcement issues with his property located at 432 Oak Grove.
Phil Muth asked if the City paid the Town of Beloit for July services, and asked who would be at fault for breach of contract for no services with the Town of Beloit.
Clark Schoonover asked if the Chief is working shifts. Mr. Schoonover said the City is leaning on neighbors too much and would like to see the Fire Department issues addressed on social media.
Deann Muth agreed with Mr. Schoonover's comment about social media and asked when the Town of Beloit signed the contract. Ms. Muth asked when Fire Fighters get their paramedic certificates for the ability to work in both Illinois and Wisconsin.
Debbie Dunlap is concerned with the ambulance and said there's a big problem with staffing. Ms. Dunlap discounted social media sources and said it's best to hear from the source.
Mayor Fitzgerald provided statistics with staffing and provided information other Fire Departments are having. Mayor Fitzgerald reviewed the pay comparisons with South Beloit positions to neighboring Fire Departments for Fire Fighters, EMT's, Paramedics, and Full time Fire Fighters. Mayor Fitzgerald provided statistics on Full and Part-time Firefighters and said it's not getting better. Licenses from the State will come. Mayor Fitzgerald said he asked both Fire Chiefs if residents are safe, and both responded yes.
Wally Thiering is confused at how the Town of Beloit can get Fire Fighters, but the City of South Beloit can't. Mr. Thiering said the pay is not enough for Full-time Fire Fighters.
Anthony Torno said students from the High School should be talked to about Fire Fighting careers. Mr. Torno said he had a heart attack 2 years ago and the response time to get an ambulance to him was 5 minutes.
Angela Teeters said the Council Meeting times keep people from running for Council. Ms. Teeters said Council needs to keep themselves open to a meeting. Low staff is scary.

Mayor Fitzgerald said he has always been open and available for residents. Mayor Fitzgerald said the city has had different meeting times but there was no or very low attendance no matter what times the meetings were.

Dave asked where the money from the pot shops was going.

Deann Muth asked if there was 1 paramedic who can give care on an ambulance?

Clark Schoonover said the city needs a long-term solution.

Debbie Dunlap asked if the city is not afraid of getting sued.

Chief Pease responded to the questions from the public. Chief Pease stated no money has been exchanged yet and won't until Town of Beloit receives the Illinois Department of Public Health Licensures for Illinois.

Chief Pease asked City Administrator to answer the Breach of Contract question. City Administrator, Sonya Hoppes stated there is no breach of contract as long as we are covered and mutual aid in place.

Chief Pease stated it's not uncommon for a Fire Chief to be in charge of multiple Fire Stations.

Chief Pease stated the ISOL rating will increase by having more full-time staffing and coverage. This will not increase the insurance rates.

Chief Pease stated he is not a fan of social media. Social media is one person's perspective and is not working with the facts.

Chief Pease stated the City of South Beloit signed the contract in January 2024 and Town of Beloit in March 2024. A lot of legalities had to occur, and the last item is the paramedic licensures in Illinois.

Chief Pease stated South Beloit can hire full time, but when a Fire Fighter is getting into this profession, they don't want to be at a single station. There are more incentives with bigger fire departments along with the experience and training. The Town of Beloit is a small department, but it is growing and has more opportunities. This is why we are able to hire. The Town of Beloit is building a second fire department. Chief Pease answered the question regarding why we aren't going to the High Schools to recruit students. Chief Pease stated that you really need to start in grade school. High School is too late for them. In grade school you are priming them and working with them all the way through High School and getting them into the Tech Colleges. They can start getting the minimal requirements in High School.

Chief Pease feels that Council would love to see a full room so that we have community input for some of the decisions Council must vote on.

Chief Pease stated Chief Griffin did a great job trying to identify the issues, working through the issues. Is this the right decision going from paid on call to full time department? It was the only decision. Volunteerism and paid on call aren't there anymore.

Chief Pease stated the right date to start this process is not up to the City of South Beloit or the Town of Beloit. This is up to Illinois Department of Health for the license.

Commissioner Adleman stated city staff has worked with State Representative, John Cabella to expedite the license. Chief Pease stated the starting date was the best scenario. There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes and a lot of legal things that they are still working through.

Chief Pease stated someone will always be able to respond to a 911 call. All Fire Departments have entered into auto aid and mutual aid with the neighboring communities.

Chief Pease stated all personnel are certified and training every day. This is all logged. This is a long-time solution along with staffing full-time personnel.

Chief Pease stated the response time average from July 1-31 was an average of 5 minutes and 42 seconds. This is not the first vehicle; this is all the vehicles.

Randy Peterson stated that if a call comes into South Beloit, it must be the first to respond before Rockton or Mutual Aid. What will we do if a second call comes in? Chief Pease said that was a false statement. Mutual Aid agencies can respond first to any of our scene incidents.

Dave asked how long the contract is for and will South Beloit be allowed to form its own department? City Attorney Sosnowski stated that she doesn't have the contract in front of her but believes it is a year or more for the time frame if either the City or Town of Beloit wants to go separate ways.

Phil Muth asked if the Fire Department has been short staffed for years? Mayor Fitzgerald answered yes and that this is nothing new.

Debbie Dunlap asked about contracting. City Administrator, Hoppes stated that the city did look into this and that they were 12-18 months out to staff.

Susan Miller asked how long the talks have been going on. Mayor Fitzgerald stated this has been in the paper several times and talked about it at the Council Meetings. Mayor Fitzgerald stated the city does not go on Facebook to inform the public of what's going on. Commissioner Morse stated we were in discussions with 2 other departments and contracting. This has been going on for a year and a half to two years.

Lori Domanski asked if we only have 1 person in the building and the call goes out for South Beloit and he can't respond, how much of a delay will that be, or will it be Mutual Aid or Private Ambulance set up until we get Town of Beloit in? When the Town of Beloit is in, are you guaranteed to be here?

Nicole Schnack talked about the pay for the staffing and the cost of the contract. City Attorney Sosnowski stated the decision made was not to save money, it could cost more. The decision was made because of a staffing issue. All municipal employees qualify for Pension and Insurance, so this all-in cost is \$75,000-\$100,000. The City of South Beloit will be paying Town of Beloit all the hard cost is for each employee. The City of South Beloit even did a study back in 2013-2014 for the Fire Department. The City of South Beloit also attempted to match money and that was not working. Young recruits were coming to South Beloit and getting training then leaving for bigger departments and more opportunities. Nicole asked for the all-in cost per person.

Randy Peterson asked about a contract to pay back the training if they don't stay. Mayor Fitzgerald stated the City does make the employees sign a contract that if they don't stay for a certain amount of time for employment, they will need to pay back the cost of the training.

Dave asked if the city was giving up on the Fire Department? Commissioner Morse stated we are not giving up on the South Beloit Fire Department. We are manning it with personnel through the Town of Beloit.

Debbie Hart stated that after listening to everybody and being in the medical field, she understands and said this is a good idea, but just wants to know when it will happen. Ms. Hart feels everyone one in the room would be happy if they just knew a date.

Mayor Fitzgerald stated that anyone can call him anytime and he will answer any questions he can.

Jason Griffin stated the people serving now are working hard and dedicated to the Fire Department. They need to be honored and respected.

Dave asked if the money being paid to the Town of Beloit was for the Fire Fighters only. Administrator Hoppes said yes. The city will maintain the building, grass etc.

Mayor Fitzgerald thanked everyone for coming.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Commissioner Morse made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Regular Council Meeting held on July 15, 2024. Commissioner Adleman second the motion. Voice vote carried the motion.

REPORT OF OFFICERS:

1. Finance:

Commissioner Adleman made a motion to approve the claims paid from July 13 – August 2, 2024 in the amount of \$314,206.86. Commissioner Prentice second the motion. Roll call vote showed 5 ayes.

2. Attorney Report:

3. Reports:

City Administrator Report and Staff Report
Accounts and Finance-Commissioner Ryan Adleman
Health & Public Safety-Commissioner Ken Morse
Streets & Public Improvement-Commissioner Brian Hedrington
Public Properties-Commissioner Courtney Prentice
Mayor-Tom Fitzgerald

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- a. Commissioner Prentice made a motion to approve Ordinance 2808 Amending Chapter 118 Zoning of the City of South Beloit Code of Ordinances to amend Section 2 and Create Section 21 to allow for the keeping of hens in certain residential areas. Commissioner Morse second the motion. Roll call vote showed 4 ayes and 1 nay by Commissioner Hedrington.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Commissioner Prentice made a motion to approve Ordinance 2809 approving a Text Amendment amending various provisions of the City of South Beloit Zoning Code rewrite Ordinance. Commissioner Morse second the motion. Community Development Director, Shawna Henthorn said the ordinance is to address the items that were approved in between the new Zoning Code rewrite. Roll call vote showed 5 ayes.
- b. Commissioner Adleman made a motion to approve Ordinance 2810 approving a Text Amendment to the City of South Beloit Zoning Code to amend Chapter 118 Zoning, to provide for Temporary Special Amusement Event as a Special Use in the (CR) Commercial Retail and (CG) Commercial General Zoning District. Commissioner Morse second the motion. Community Development Director, Shawna Henthorn said there is an applicant for a Special Use Permit for a Haunted House use. Roll call vote showed 5 ayes.
- c. Commissioner Adleman made a motion to approve Ordinance 2811 approving a Special Use Permit in the (CR) Commercial Retail Zoning District to allow for a Haunted House use for the property located at 807 Progressive Ln., South Beloit, Illinois, Winnebago County, with PIN No. 04-18-102-004. Commissioner Prentice second the motion. Council discussed the temporary use being in a building that is permanent. Community Development Director, Shawna Henthorn said the applicant was asking for port-a-trailers for restrooms, however; the Winnebago County Building Department will not allow temporary bathrooms. If the number of employees exceeds 5 (2) restrooms will be required. Owner, Jesse Contraras was present and said that the request for temporary restrooms would only be for the first 2 months of operations to get revenues to afford adding the restrooms. Mr. Henthorn said the Fire Marshall regulates the use of haunted houses. After discussion Council determined no temporary restrooms could be approved. Roll call vote showed 5 ayes.
- d. Commissioner Adleman made a motion to approve Resolution 6538 retroactively approving a Compliance Commitment Agreement between the Illinois EPA and the City of South Beloit regarding violation Notice W-2024-50078. Commissioner Morse second the motion. Roll call vote showed 5 ayes.
- e. Commissioner Morse made a motion to approve Resolution 6539 reappointing Members to the Library Board as follows:
- Jose Alarcon is hereby appointed to a (3) three-year term set to expire on July 1, 2027
 - Crystal Ellis is hereby appointed to a (3) three-year term set to expire on July 1, 2027
- Commissioner Adleman second the motion. Roll call vote showed 5 ayes.

- f. Commissioner Prentice made a motion to approve authorizing the City Administrator to draft and send a termination letter to Smith Oil terminating the Fuel Supply Agreement. Commissioner Adleman second the motion. Roll call vote showed 5 ayes.
- g. Commissioner Adleman made a motion to approve a proposal for Fehr Graham to submit an ITEP Application. Administrator Hoppes said the grant is for funding to connect mobility paths. Roll call vote showed 5 ayes.
- h. Commissioner Adleman made a motion to approve a request for \$500.00 sponsorship for Nature at the Confluence from the Parks and Rec Board. Commissioner Morse second the motion. Commissioner Prentice said the Beloit International Film Festival is looking for partners and would like to see the funds come from the Hotel Motel Fund. Roll call vote showed 5 ayes.

ADJOURN:

At 7:12 pm on a motion by Commissioner Adleman second by Commissioner Prentice. Voice vote carried the motion.

Mayor

City Clerk

Approved: