

Virtual Council Meeting  
January 3, 2022

Members Present: Mayor Buddy Duke, members Terry McClain, Greg Paige, Walter Cowart, and Jody Greene

Others Present: John Flythe, Rhonda Rowe, Tim Tanner, Chad Castleberry, and Randy Lane. Immediate family members of the newly elected councilmember were also in attendance.

Invocation was given by Councilman McClain

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes: Councilman Greg Paige made a motion to approve the minutes of December 20, 2021 as presented. Councilman McClain seconded with all in favor.

Swearing-In of New Councilmember: City attorney Tim Tanner presided over the swearing-in ceremony and submitted the oath of office to newly elected councilmember Celestine F. Hayes. Mrs. Hayes will serve as the representative of District 1, Post 1 for a four-year term.

Mayor Pro-Tem: Following the rotation of chairs, Councilman Greene made a motion to appoint Terry McClain as Mayor Pro-tem for 2022. Councilman Paige seconded with all in favor.

Council Meeting Date Change: Due to the observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, Councilman Cowart made a motion to move the next council meeting to Tuesday, January 18, 2022. Councilman McClain seconded. The decision was unanimous.

Dr. Treva Gear: Dr. Gear addressed the council to follow-up on the establishment of a complaint process that allows complaints to be documented. She questioned when she could expect a response. Mayor Duke advised that presently, you can call in to report any type of complaint. If its trash, we normally take care of it ASAP but we don't record how many times someone calls because a dog is barking. We try to resolve issues within the first 24 hours or so; for the most part, that seems to be working. Beyond that, the City tries to make sure complaints are taken care of; if not, it's up to the individual to report or file a grievance legally if they don't feel like it's being handled properly. Dr. Gear responded that it hard to enforce ordinances when there is no documentation, verbal doesn't work. Something is needed in writing if it is tied to a nuisance ordinance. Mayor Duke advised we will get with the attorney and hopefully get answers soon.

Appointment of Main Street Board Members: Brandie Dame, Main Street Manager, advised the council that there are three members rotating off the board. Those members are Randy Lane, Lea Hazel and Maria Hardman. They need to appoint 3 members as replacements that will serve two year terms. The members should either live or work in Cook County. Three names submitted for recommendation were Shonna O'Quinn, Latoya Turner and Elizabeth Matherne. Councilman Greene made a motion to approve the recommendations. Councilman McClain seconded. The decision was unanimous.

Land Bank Appointments: City Manager John Flythe advised the council we needed to appoint members for the newly formed Land Bank. He asked the members to begin thinking about nominees such as realtors and related business fields. He noted the County and school board will also be making appointments.

Christmas Decorations Committee: City Manager John Flythe advised that Sharon Harnage is forming a committee to help with Christmas decorations for downtown. She will be making a presentation at the next meeting. He advised that anyone interested in serving on the committee needed to contact Sharon or him.

Utility Billing Update: John Flythe advised the council that we are hoping to send out bills tomorrow for cycle 2, which will be the ones that would have normally been sent on 9/14/2021. There will not be late fees assessed if the bill is not paid within 10 days; however, the utilities will be subject to disconnection and related fees if not paid within 21 days. After these bills are issued, we will then move to processing the cycle 1 bills. Any problems encountered will be brought to the council. He stated that the computations performed have been phenomenal. The utility billing clerk has worked many late nights and weekends with the programmer performing validations. The programmer has been under the gun and done a fine job for us with so many cities being dropped. He noted we will then undergo another conversion in the area of IT in April. Mayor Duke stated he has heard about the bills day in/day out and is glad the bills are going out. He noted that our budgeted revenues have been sitting in arrears now for 4 months and it gets more critical every day. It has been an on-going struggle and he commended the staff for the work they've done.

Other Business:

Celestine F. Hayes – Ms. Hayes stated that she is thankful, honored and humbled to hold the position of newly elected councilmember and will do her best to serve the citizens of the city.

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

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Rhonda P. Rowe, City Clerk

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Luther L. Duke III, Mayor

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