

**CITY OF WIXOM
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2024**

Mayor Beagle called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Present:

Mayor: P. Beagle
Deputy Mayor: T. Rzeznik
Councilmembers: P. Behrmann
K. Gottschall
T. Gronlund-Fox
P. Sharpe
R. Smiley

AGENDA CHANGES: (None)

MINUTES:

CM-02-21-24: Moved and seconded by Councilmembers Gronlund-Fox and Behrmann to approve the Regular City Council meeting minutes of January 23, 2024.

Vote:

Motion Carried

CORRESPONDENCE: (None)

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

There were no comments made at this time.

CITY MANAGER REPORTS:

1.) Fire Monthly Report - December 2023

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik noticed that the December Priority Calls were under six minutes. Overall, there was an improvement. He wondered if that was due to the full-time staffing at the Fire Department. Lieutenant Breitmeyer replied that having staff there 24 hours has definitely improved our response time.

2.) Police Monthly Report – December 2023

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

CONSENT AGENDA:

CM-02-22-24: Motion and seconded made by Councilmembers Sharpe and Smiley to approve the Consent Agenda as presented which included:

- 1.) Approval to receive and file:
 - a.) Library Board Minutes – November 27, 2023
 - b.) Downtown Development Authority Minutes – November 28, 2023
 - c.) Planning Commission Minutes – December 4, 2023

- 2.) Recommendation to Authorize Participation in GovDeals.com to Sell a Surplus 2008 Ford F-450 Small Dump Truck and Designate Russ Pierson as the Authorized Agent for the Sale of the Property
- 3.) 2023 Planning Commission Annual Report
- 4.) 2023 Economic Development & Economic Development Marketing 2023 Annual Report

Vote:

Motion Carried

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1.) Road Millage (Major and Local) Correspondence

Mr. Brown stated that this was part of a package with the New Business item to consider putting a renewal of the additional operating millage on the ballot in August of this year. Council has previously discussed these two millages. This item was regarding the possibility of a road millage on the November Presidential ballot.

Councilmember Gottschall asked if Attachment 6 was the proposed language and Mr. Brown said that was correct. Councilmember Gottschall said that after the last discussion on this, he received a call from one of our residents who agreed that the roads needed to be dealt with. His main question was going with the "up to 2.5 mills" since our general fund and budget stabilization carried a healthy balance. Part of his questioning was if it would make sense or have we considered as a Council, figuring out if anyone felt comfortable spending down that combined reserve to lessen the "up to" number or to change something about the millage. The add-on information the Council received tonight showed the general fund at 29% and our budget stabilization at 9%. The auditors say no less than 15% and up to 35%. He posed this question to the rest of Council to hear their thoughts.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik commented that one thing we had significant discussion on that evening was keeping the language "up to 2.5 mills" for the fact that maybe the first year we only levy a half mill if we wanted to eat some of that budget up. Keeping the language "up to" gives us some leeway. As Mr. Sikma had stated earlier, who knows what construction costs will be in four years. After that discussion, he felt comfortable keeping it that way instead of a hard 1.5 mills.

Mayor Beagle agreed with Deputy Mayor Rzeznik. If we keep it with the "up to" language, that will do the job of fixing the roads and getting them in better shape for our citizens.

Councilmember Gottschall liked the "up to" language. It gave flexibility on what we collect. As we prepare the budgets coming up, it might be worth having the discussion if we were comfortable with the level we are at for reserves and how we spend that.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox questioned the potential override to the rollback. She asked if that was pertaining to the general fund or all funds. Mr. Brown thought the Council had discussed the idea of overriding the Headlee cutbacks to our millage capabilities and putting it back up to the original and maximum, but he didn't think they were interested in pursuing that so he didn't put that into the option package.

If we were to do that, that money could be used for any operating cost. Councilmember Gronlund-Fox asked if the thought was the Headlee rollback to all funds or just the general fund. Mr. Brown said it would restore the millage to the prior level and we would be collecting that year in and year out. Councilmember Gronlund-Fox asked what the original millage was that was authorized by the Charter. Mr. Brown said it was a total of 8 mills and the Headlee override would take it up to that original 8 mills.

Councilmember Sharpe said he was glad to hear Councilmember Gottschall's reaction to a citizen writing about spending down our general fund balance. He knew for sure that the same idea had come from his end of the dais. He supported spending down if we can and he still had questions about road contract or capacity over the next year. He was not saying no to the 2.5 mills as a number; he was saying no to doing it next year while we already have a road millage in place. He would like to move it out a year. There have been concerns about what if it didn't pass, but he has also heard that our taxpayers are happy with what we are doing and they will gladly approve it. He wasn't sure which way to go on whether it will pass or not. He wasn't 100% sure that 2.5 mills was the correct number, but he did think we should continue with about 1.15 mills that we are getting over the next year with the current road millage and approve this next year at this time to go on the ballot for 2026/2027 to replace the one that expires in 2025/2026. He said he was still voting no to put something on the ballot in November.

Councilmember Behrmann said he was fine with the language as proposed. He thought putting this forward sooner rather than later was better. A couple of the municipalities that we have watched that have tried the Headlee rollback haven't passed. He knew that Berkley's failed. He would much rather start this sooner rather than later, especially with some of our major roads that are going to need some work soon. We aren't even collecting a major road millage currently because it expired.

Mr. Brown pointed out that the override becomes subject to the rollback again in the future. It was not a consistent revenue source like the road millage promised to be. If you thought 2.5 was what was required and you get .55 from that override, that will start to come down just like the road millage would.

Councilmember Behrmann asked if Administration was looking for a motion this evening. Mr. Benson said it didn't have to be approved tonight, unless the Council wanted the road millage on the August ballot. The request was that we prepare ballot language and he wanted to provide it now in case the Council wanted to act in some different way. Councilmember Behrmann confirmed that the operational millage would be on the August ballot and Mr. Benson replied that was a later agenda item. Councilmember Behrmann didn't want two millage proposals on the same ballot.

Mr. Brown stated that there was no need to take action tonight if the Council decided to put the road millage on the November ballot. We could do that at an upcoming Council meeting.

Councilmember Gottschall said that the Council could still take action tonight saying it would be for the November ballot. He said he would rather get it done tonight and it can be submitted to the County and the State for November. He didn't think we would change the number based on the discussion today.

CM-02-23-24: Moved and seconded by Councilmembers Gottschall and Behrmann to adopt the Resolution authorizing the placement of the ballot proposal on the November 5, 2024 General Election Ballot and authorize the proposal to terminate the current millage for maintenance of local streets and replace it with the millage for the maintenance of local and major roads and streets in the City for ten years commencing July 1, 2025 and effective through and including July 1, 2034, for the sole and exclusive purpose of providing additional revenues for routine and ongoing local and major road and street maintenance.

For a point of clarification, Deputy Mayor Rzeznik stated that the up to 2.5 mills wasn't just for the local roads. We had an already expired major road millage that was gone. This was really to supplement both local and major roads.

Councilmember Smiley asked if the up to 2.5 mills would put us on the path to a six PASER rating and Mr. Sikma replied yes.

Mr. Brown stated that this would terminate the current millage.

Councilmember Sharpe indicated that he did not support the motion as presented by Councilmember Gottschall because he believed the best path forward was to spend down our surplus and our general fund on a need that we all say is very important (our roads). The surplus in the general fund represents tax dollars that we have basically over-collected and haven't needed. He thought we should use them for something we say we need, which was to supplement the millage that we already have in place. We could defer the question on up to how much in the following year to place on the ballot in 2025. This would replace the current road millage we have. He understood it was local roads, but the draw down on the general fund would be sufficient to pay for some major roads in the next fiscal year if we needed. He thought we had enough money already. We don't need to over-tax the residents further. We already have over-taxed them and that was why we had a surplus in our general fund. He would not be supporting the motion to put an additional tax on the ballot in November.

Councilmember Gottschall understood Councilmember Sharpe's perspective and he thought they worked in conjunction. He didn't think this necessarily meant we couldn't spend down the money. In his mind, the up to language was that maybe in year one the funding for the projects does come from spending down the fund. That collection was nothing or half a mill, whatever the case may be. He didn't think it was a "we can't do both" situation.

**Roll Call Vote: (6) AYES – Beagle, Behrmann, Gottschall, Gronlund-Fox,
Rzeznik, Smiley**

(1) NAY – Sharpe

Motion Carried

2.) City Council Rules of Procedure

Mr. Brown stated that the Mayor and Council had expressed an interest in revisiting the Council Rules of Procedure. Previously, we provided the current Rules of Procedure as well as a draft that was provided by Councilmember Gottschall with suggested changes. The intent was to have the discussion to see if there were any changes that the Council wanted to make.

Councilmember Behrmann noted that he gave all of his feedback to Councilmember Gottschall but he did not see any of that feedback. Councilmember Gottschall said that he got feedback from him and Councilmember Sharpe and he has those notes. He knew he wanted to change the regular meeting dates in December and the budget study session be set for the third week of April. Councilmember Behrmann said he was slightly annoyed that he spent the time to give his feedback but it was not in this packet. Councilmember Gottschall said this was not an update. He was looking for more feedback from the other Councilmembers. Councilmember Behrmann said that the main thing was the constant emails going back and forth to change Council meetings. We always know we are going to have the budget meeting in April. Everyone can plan ahead and know that the third week in April would be the budget meeting. It would be the same for the December meetings. If we change the date in our Rules, it will be there. He was not in support of removing the Pledge of Allegiance and didn't know why we would need to do that. He didn't care about the dress code and would leave that up to the majority to decide. He was fine with the process for Council vacancy if that was what the rest of the Council wanted.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik said he was in favor of most of the changes. He was fine with the budget meeting being either the third or fourth week of April, but he did suggest that we allow for some flexibility by adding unless voted on by the majority of Council to change it. There may be a situation where we wouldn't have a quorum. He was opposed to removing the Pledge and he would prefer that the Council was more formally dressed but he would go with the majority of Council.

Councilmember Smiley thought Deputy Mayor Rzeznik made a good point by adding the flexibility for the budget meeting dates. He was curious as to why we would remove the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilmember Gottschall stated that the Council has all sworn an oath that completely covered the Pledge. There was nothing that stated any member of the public had to do the Pledge. He thought it was a little redundant. He knew there were certain cases where it might be against someone's particular religion to pledge allegiance. They may feel left out or that people were looking at them differently because they weren't doing it. Councilmember Smiley said he would like to keep the Pledge.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox requested the removal of the masculine pronouns.

Mayor Beagle agreed that the budget meetings should be in there with the flexibility. He wanted to keep the Pledge of Allegiance and the dress code. He didn't think we should change any of the Rules of Procedures on Boards and Commissions. He knew the Tax Abatement has been a big issue. There are business

owners who pay more taxes than homeowners so he thought they should be allowed on a committee.

Councilmember Sharpe said he generally agreed with Councilmember Gottschall. Regarding wearing ties, he was happy to vote with optional, but he also deferred to the Mayor. If the Mayor would like to keep the ties, he was good with that. He felt we should keep the Pledge of Allegiance to remind ourselves why we support the democratic process and the constitution. He supported the changes to the Boards and Commissions and he directionally supported the changes to appointment to a Council vacancy, but he thought the language was cumbersome. If we agree we want to make a change, he felt we needed to work on that language. Regarding the General Conduct of Councilmembers, he pictured some neighboring communities where people were coming across the table at each other. He hoped we wouldn't have to publish something about treating each other with respect and behaving ourselves in the meetings. In the section about Agendas, we say "packets and agendas distributed to Council" and "agenda published to the general public." Our practice has been posting the packets as well to the general public so he wanted to add that.

Councilmember Behrmann liked the idea of adding the packets.

Councilmember Smiley agreed. He also liked that the Councilmembers wear a tie.

Councilmember Gottschall said that he was taking notes, he would address what was initially put out and he hoped it would come back to Council on another agenda for a vote. He summarized that the Budget Study Session would be the third week of April with flexibility to be changed by the majority of Council ahead of time. Also, the pronouns would be changed.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik suggested that Councilmember Gottschall provide a clean, redlined version for the next meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: (None)

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1.) Recommendation to Consider the Appointment of Tom Rzeznik as the Deputy Mayor in Accordance with the Wixom City Charter, Chapter 4, Section 4.7**

CM-02-24-24: Motion and seconded made by Councilmembers Smiley and Gronlund-Fox to appoint Tom Rzeznik as the Deputy Mayor in accordance with the Wixom City Charter, Chapter 4, Section 4.7.

Mayor Beagle said Tom has been the Deputy Mayor for his first two terms and he would like to keep this as is.

Vote:

Motion Carried

2.) Recommendation to Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the Placement of a Ballot Proposal on the August 6, 2024 Primary Election Ballot to Consider Authorization of the Renewal of an Additional Operating Millage of Up to 3.5 Mills (Equal to \$3.50 per \$1,000 of Taxable Value) for an Additional Four (4) Years, Commencing July 1, 2025, and Effective Through and Including July 1, 2028, to Provide Funds for Municipal Operating Purposes Including Police and Fire, Public Works and Parks and Recreation

CM-02-25-24: Motion and seconded made by Deputy Mayor Rzeznik and Councilmember Gronlund-Fox to adopt a resolution authorizing the placement of a ballot proposal on the August 6, 2024 Primary Election Ballot to consider authorization of the renewal of an additional Operating Millage of up to 3.5 mills (equal to \$3.50 per \$1,000 of taxable value) for an additional four (4) years, commencing July 1, 2025, and effective through and including July 1, 2028, to provide funds for municipal operating purposes including Police and Fire, Public Works and Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Brown said that we were looking to have the additional operating millage placed before voters for potential renewal at the August 6th Primary Election for a four-year period. He was recommending that the Council adopt the resolution.

Councilmember Gottschall said that the assumptions indicate 2% for taxable value increase and it looked like the actual has been above 5% most years recently. He thought 3.5 mills was too large. He understood the chart, but it seemed that some of the assumptions in the chart were a little too low compared to what we have been experiencing. He didn't foresee a circumstance where we would have a decline in taxable value. He said he would prefer to limit ourselves up to 3 mills. It was even projected for 3 mills for next fiscal year where we will be running a surplus of just over \$380,000. That was approaching half a mill worth of revenue. He felt that we could bring in less so we wouldn't have to ask for the 3.5 mills. He thought that was where we get into the territory of these other projects or wanting to bring in other people to do jobs. If we know the money is there, we aren't limiting ourselves. Maybe time was being spent on other projects that we don't have intention of doing. He would really like to see us trim back from the up to 3.5 mills. If we adjust the assumption from 2% growth to what was provided today at our seats, he thought this chart would look different.

**Roll Call Vote: (6) AYES – Beagle, Behrmann, Gronlund-Fox, Rzeznik,
Sharpe, Smiley
(1) NAY - Gottschall**

Motion Carried

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

There were no comments made at this time.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS:

Mr. Brown said that the City recently upgraded the website email communication tool, the Bulletin, from GovDelivery. One of the key aspects of this upgrade was texting capability to those who sign up for that service. We will use the texting

function to communicate in emergency situations such as Boil Water Advisories. Also, as a result of a recent accident at Aztec and Beck Roads, DTE will be installing a new streetlight by spring. This project will proceed under a cost sharing agreement between the City and DTE.

Mr. Benson commented that in the past, we have talked about the safety concerns on Pontiac Trail related to the Airline Trail. He thanked Mr. Sikma and HRC for looking into the grant opportunities through SEMCOG for safety audits. Kudos for their work that was going on behind the scenes and he hoped more information would be coming forward.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilmember Smiley thought the Wixom Gala sounded great. He received a reminder to sign up by February 26th. He said this was a replacement for the Wine Tasting that stopped because of Covid. He wondered if there was a further explanation for the Wine Tasting being discontinued. He knew it was a popular event. Mr. Brown thought the previous company was not available or interested. He would find out from Ms. Magee. He said he was a big fan of the Wine Tasting and thought he'd be a big fan of the Gala as well.

Councilmember Sharpe had no comments.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox had no comments.

Councilmember Gottschall said in regards to streetlights and safety, when driving from I-96 on Wixom Road north through our whole new redeveloped area, it is very dark at night. There are no streetlights. We are relying solely on parking lot lights. He asked if that was a Wixom thing or a RCOC/County thing. He was not a fan of light pollution, but that is a main road. It was more noticeable during winter when the roads are horrible. Mr. Brown noticed the same concern. He thought we could talk to the different agencies to see what was going on. Mr. Benson said that might be something the Road Commission may do. If he wanted a say as to what the lighting was, that would be a City cost. The downtown light poles were a great example of that. Mr. Sikma stated that the City pays for all of the lights. Councilmember Gottschall just wanted to see the road. He thought maybe large LED, not decorative, lights. What made it worse was the foggy weather. He thought we needed to look at this as a project, especially as that area continues to be developed.

Councilmember Behrmann thanked the employees who put on the Daddy Daughter Dance. It was another great year for his daughters and they had a good time.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik thanked the Council for his reappointment as Deputy Mayor for the next two years. He said he would not be present at next week's meeting. He thought the e-Notification change had a nice look. He was very impressed when he saw the change.

Mayor Beagle thanked the Council for supporting Tom as Deputy Mayor again for two more years.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Catherine Buck
City Clerk

Approved 3-12-2024
