

A Regular Meeting of the Otsego City Commission was held on Tuesday, September 8, 2020.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Trobeck at 7:00 p.m. with the following Commissioners present: Stacey Withee, Lauri Krueger, and Dustin McNees. Absent: Brent Milhiem. Also present: City Manager Mitchell, Police Chief Misner, and Fire Chief Weber.

The audience joined the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner McNees moved to excuse Commissioner Milhiem, seconded by Commissioner Krueger. CARRIED.

The August 17, 2020, Regular, Special, and Closed Meeting Minutes were approved as submitted.

REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE REGARDING AGENDA ITEMS

None.

I. PRESENTATIONS:

A. COUNTY COMMISSIONER GALE DUGAN UPDATE

Commissioner Dugan was unable to attend.

II. PUBLIC HEARING:

III. PLANNING AND ZONING:

IV. ORDINANCES:

V. REQUESTS:

VI. AGREEMENTS:

VII. RESOLUTIONS:

VIII. APPOINTMENTS:

IX. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL FULL-TIME POLICE OFFICER

At this time, Police Chief Misner gave an overview of the current needs of the Police Department in regards to staffing. He explained that historically part-time officers were hired to assist covering the full time officer's vacation, overtime, training and special events as needed. Chief Misner explained that the pool for police officers, especially looking for part-time work is very limited. He stated that a full time officer position would be more attractive to candidates. A lengthy discussion took place and Police Chief Misner answered questions of the Commission. Manager Mitchell briefly discussed the spreadsheet that explained the funding of the potential position. It was the consensus of the Commission to direct Police Chief Misner to pursue the hiring of an additional full-time officer.

B. CITY ATTORNEY – CITY COMMISSION ROLE IN POLICY MAKING

At this time, Attorney Marshall Grate was introduced to the Commission. Attorney Grate presented to the Commission a PowerPoint Presentation – What Does a City Commissioner Do? Which covered the following: Definition, Speaks & Acts as a Body, Open Meetings Act, FOIA, Set Policy – No Micromanagement, City Manager’s Role, Local Issues – Tax Rate, Budget, Pay Rates, and Planning Commission. He answered questions of the Commission in regards to his presentation. Commissioner McNees commented that he feels that the Commission should help craft the Body Camera policy and should have a voice in it. Commissioner McNees stated that he feels he needs to represent his constituents. Attorney Grate commented that if it is a Department Policy, usually the City Commission doesn’t vote on the policy. Attorney Grate gave the example of Battle Creek who adopted a body camera policy, that was not voted on by the City Commission. He stated that if Departmental Policy is brought to the Commission for approval it will be available for the public to view. Attorney Grate continued that many aspects of the Police Department are not subject to public view, which is incorporated in the Freedom of Information Act. Attorney Grate commented that some policies are kept from the public for good reason, to protect people. He commented that the City is very fortunate to have a Police Chief who is very experienced. Attorney Grate suggested if the Commission wanted to see the policy to go into Closed Session for review. Commissioner Withee stated that she struggles with the concept of not seeing the policy, noting that you can search anything on the internet. She explained that if a residents asks her a question about the policy, she wants to be able to explain it to them. Commissioner Krueger commented that she believes in one hundred percent transparency. She also believes one hundred percent to protect the men and women who protect us. She suggested if the policy is to be viewed, have it viewed in a Closed Session to protect the Commission and the officers. Commissioner Krueger stated that it is nice to know things, but she has full confidence in Manager Mitchell and Police Chief Misner to protect the citizens and the Police Department. Commissioner McNees commented that he thought it should be a negotiation of the people, and transparent. Commissioner Withee asked if the Michigan Municipal League had a “best practices for policy making?” City Manager Mitchell will look into best practices. Police Chief Misner explained how the Body Camera Policy was prepared. Attorney Grate suggested having a closed session review of the policy to satisfy the Commission’s curiosity. Police Chief Misner agreed with Attorney Grate and commented that he would like the Commission to trust him, but he has no problem explaining it in closed session. It was the consensus of the Commission to discuss the Body Camera Policy in Closed Session at the next meeting.

MANAGER'S REPORT

1. He gave updates on the following:
 - Groundwater Ordinance
 - Cost Recovery Ordinance
 - Otsego Fitness will be opening tomorrow
 - RRC Meeting
2. He asked for further questions or comments regarding his written Manager’s Report submitted to the Commission in their weekly packet.

COMMUNICATIONS

None.

REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Jenny Borman, Otsego-Plainwell Chamber – she announced there will be a Creative Arts Festival Meeting on Thursday. She announced other events that the Chamber is working on: Ladies Night, Shop Small Saturday, and Hometown Christmas.

Pam McQueer, Crayons 4 Kids – she gave an overview of her plan to have a Charity Cruise In on October 3, 2020, at Memorial Park. She stated that she had spoken with the City Manager and he had indicated that insurance would be needed for the event and an agreement executed. She asked the Commission to waive the insurance requirement. Mayor Trobeck asked her to prepare a request that would include a map to be formally presented to the Commission.

Gretchen Kershaw, 115 S Fair Street – she asked if the Police Department is aware of the activity at the gas station and the grounds at City Hall. She was directed to contact Police Chief Misner.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Withee – she thanked Attorney Grate for the needed refresher. She commented that there was valuable discussion tonight and she is looking forward to more.

Commissioner Krueger – she thanked Police Chief Misner and Attorney Grate. She echoed Commission Withee's comments that it is nice to have valuable discussions.

Commissioner McNees – he thanked the Otsego-Plainwell Chamber for the Creative Arts Festival as it is good for the community. He commented that he appreciated Pam McQueer's efforts for the Crayons 4 Kids. He thanked the Commission for talking openly.

Mayor Trobeck – she thanked Attorney Grate for attending the meeting and for his presentation. She thanked Police Chief Misner and the Police Department. She thanked Jenny Borman of the Chamber for the information. She thanked the audience for bringing questions to the Commission.

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Commissioner McNees seconded by Commissioner Krueger. CARRIED – 8:20 p.m.

Angela M. Cronen, MMC
City Clerk