

FEBRUARY 18, 2020

The Common Council of the City of LaPorte met in regular session on Tuesday, February 18, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Pledge

Councilman Galloway led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Galloway, Franke, Vincent, Brown, Feikes and West

Absent: Cutler

Petitions & Comments

Mayor Dermody announced we have a few special guests tonight that he would like to introduce and give them an opportunity to speak to the Council.

The first is Parker Peterson a sophomore at LaPorte High School. Parker reported she was nominated by a former teacher for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Student of the Year Program. She reported this is a seven-week long fundraising competition which consists of other local high school students to compete to see who can raise the most money for Leukemia and Lymphoma. She reported her team has raised close to \$12,000 in two weeks with a goal of \$25,000 by March 19th. Parker stated there are several ways people can help. If you follow Parker's Sparklers on Facebook, please share to get the word out there. Monetary donations are always appreciated as well as there are several give back nights planned over the next few weeks. Parker advised they are planning a spaghetti dinner and lantern lighting event planned at First Church of God on March 8th. She advised there is a grand finale planned for March 19th where there will be silent and live auction items that each team donates which counts towards the total amount raised. The Student of the Year will be announced at the end of that evening after all donations have been received and counted.

Mayor Dermody stated he believes everybody in one way or another has been touched by cancer so thank you very much for all that you and your team are doing and encourages everyone to support this great cause.

Mayor Dermody introduced Amelia Hakes-Wright as another young person in our community who is trying to make a difference. Amelia is an 8th grader at LaPorte Middle School. She gave a video presentation on vaping in our community and her concerns with this growing trend especially with our youth. Amelia stated she would like to see less banners and advertising in our community as our young people are influenced by this. Councilwoman West stated she is an elementary teacher and they talk with their students about vaping and the hazards but when children see their parents doing it they feel it is safe and okay for them to do it as well. Councilwoman West thanked Amelia for taking this upon herself to bring this to everyone's attention.

Mayor Dermody thanked Amelia for her presentation and encouraged her to continue her good work.

Gene Dollberg, 159 Regency Place and President of the Regency Place Condos, addressed the Council regarding the School Corporation purchasing 35 acres between Keston Elm and 18th Streets. Mr. Dollberg stated he has heard there is the possibility the School Corporation is planning on moving the bus garage to this location. He stated he is concerned that property is coming off the tax role which effects the City's net assessed valuation. He stated the City needs better housing for new people moving here as we are working hard to bring in more industry and commercial areas. Mr. Dollberg stated in talking with the School Superintendent, the School Corporation hasn't made a final decision yet on what they are going to do with the property, however it is currently zoned R1B. He stated zoning changes would need City approval before they can move forward. Mr. Dollberg stated he is not against the school corporation, as a good school system attracts people to move here, however, he worries about the fact the City is losing valuable property that could be used for residential housing.

Mayor Dermody reported the City has been made aware of the purchase of the property by the School Corporation. He advised the owners would not sell the property to the City and would only sell it to the School Corporation. The Mayor advised the City is very interested in partnering with the School Corporation on this piece of land. He reported the School Board will be having a public meeting tomorrow evening at 5:30 p.m. at the Educational Services Center. He stated the public is invited, however, they will not be able to speak.

Councilman Franke advised there is additional information on the School Corporation's website. He reported other possible uses for the property include a field house and athletic fields. Councilman Franke reported at the last School Board meeting they stated they were very interested in partnering with the City on ideas for the property.

Christine Rosenbaum stated she works in Slicer Support Services for the LaPorte Community School Corporation. She reported she provides education, prevention and counseling on a variety of topics for the students. Ms. Rosenbaum thanked Amelia for expressing her concerns about vaping in our schools as well as our community. She shared some of the initiatives that LaPorte Community School Corporation has already implemented regarding vaping.

Brian Kajer, 406 Niesen Street, reported he contacted Speedway LLC who owns the property at 111 E. Lincolnway to ask them to do something with their property. He stated the response he received was that they have no immediate plans for the building. Mr. Kajer provided the Council with a copy of his email to Speedway and encouraged them to contact Speedway and put pressure on them to at least make the building look presentable even if they aren't going to open a business at that location. Mr. Kajer stated our streets are bad, which is something the Mayor eluded to while campaigning. He stated you can't urban sprawl until we can maintain our current City streets, we don't need to be broadening the

City. He stated we need to encourage people to come in and build within the City instead of urban sprawl, making our City bigger and bigger because then we have more roads that we can't maintain to begin with. Councilman Galloway stated over the past eight years or so the City has paved over half the streets in LaPorte which is a lot of money.

Minutes

Mayor Dermody stated each Council members received an advance copy of the minutes from the February 3rd meeting and asked if there were any corrections or additions. Councilman Galloway moved to approve the minutes as presented; motion seconded by Councilwoman Feikes and unanimously carried.

Standing Committee Reports

Airport Authority: Councilwoman Brown reported the Airport Authority met on February 13th with a lunch meeting. The simulator purchased with funds from an Arconic Grant has arrived which staff is currently being trained on. The simulator will be part of their education program. Councilwoman Brown reported the Airport will be celebrating their 75th Anniversary this year and plans to celebrate are underway.

Park & Recreation: Councilwoman Feikes reported the Park Board will be meeting tomorrow, February 19th at 4:00 p.m. at the Park Office. She advised a public meeting was held regarding the Stone Lake shoreline improvements on February 4th at Cummings Lodge with over 100 residents in attendance. Representatives of the City and design team showed concepts of the trail, median and natural areas. Attendees were given the opportunity to weigh in on the location and size of the nodes to be placed along the shoreline as well as the type of amenities they would like to see incorporated. The City will now refine community feedback into designs, engage review agencies for permitting and complete the architecture and engineering process. After Park Board approval, the City hopes to see the project bid and construction to begin this summer.

BID Board: Councilman Galloway reported the Business Improvement District met on February 10th. He advised the BID Board is continuing to work on a long-term design plan for the area. Benches and trash receptacles will be repaired starting in March, weather permitting.

Police Department: Councilman Galloway reported the Police Merit Commission met on February 11, 2020. Topics of interest: Jennifer Lewis and Pat Sights have both retired, Mike Lindsey will be administering the promotional school which includes agility and written testing which is scheduled for this next weekend. They currently have seven to eight applicants. The next Police Merit Commission meeting will be held on March 10, 2020.

School Board Liaison: Councilman Franke reported the School Board met on February 10th at which time it was announced Kingsbury will host a robotics competition on February 22nd. John Dody was recognized for Sectional Coach of the Year for wrestling and the Bowling Team was recognized for placing 11th in the State. ISTEP testing will be held for 10th grade

and the 24th-28th is the National FFA week with several events planned. Councilman Franke reported Nancy Morgan, who was his bus driver, is retiring after 39 years of service.

Mayor Dermody advised the Council the City is looking into entering into a contract with Baker Tilly to get an overall plan which will include all projected revenues and expenses long-term through 2024 so that the City can have a plan of what dollars are available for projects.

Recognition of Employee

Mayor Dermody asked Beth Shrader, Director of Community Development and Planning, to come forward. The Mayor announced that Beth will be leaving the City and asked her to say a few words. Beth advised the Council that she accepted a position with the City of Valparaiso as their Director of Planning and Transportation. She stated while this is a terrific opportunity and she is excited for a new adventure this was a hard decision. Beth stated it has been wonderful here in LaPorte and it is a community that has a special place in her heart, and she knows the City of LaPorte has a bright future. Everyone wished Beth well.

Recognition of Board Members

Mayor Dermody stated the City of LaPorte is very fortunate in that we have community members who give up their time to serve on various boards and commissions. He stated at this time he would like to recognize three individuals:

The Mayor stated Gene Dollberg was appointed to the Redevelopment Commission by Mayor Morris. He has served several administrations and was also the Redevelopment Commission's appointment to the NewPorte Landing Redevelopment Corporation. Mr. Dollberg has been a participant in the growth of LaPorte and particularly the growth of the development in NewPorte Landing.

Mayor Dermody stated Ron Shaffer was appointed by Mayor Kathy Chroback to the LaPorte County Convention and Visitors Board in 2001 and has served in that capacity through last year. During this time, he also served on the LaPorte County Alcohol and Beverage Board representing the City of LaPorte.

The Mayor stated Greg Fruth was first appointed to the Tree Commission by Mayor Kathy Chroback where he served for several years. During this time on the Commission the City's tree inventory was updated and the long-planned tree nursery became a reality. Greg has also served as the Mayor's appointment to the Police Merit Commission.

Each Board member was presented with a small gift from the City as a token of our appreciation for their dedication.

Recognition of Angela Rose, Downtown Coordinator

Bert Cook, Executive Director of LaPorte Economic Advancement Partnership, prior to asking Angela to come forward, invited the Council to attend an Economic Development

Bootcamp. This will be held on three different days with different locations. On February 27th at Michigan City, City Hall, March 3rd at the Northwest Indiana Forum in Portage and on March 5th in Starke County at their Economic Development Office. Mr. Cook stated a flier with all the information was placed in the Council's mailboxes in the Clerk-Treasurer's Office.

Mr. Cook asked Angela Rose to come forward to receive a special recognition for a grant that she won and was awarded through the Office of Community and Rural Affairs. Mr. Cook stated the project was called "The Togetherhood Project" which was done in partnership with the LaPorte YMCA. The grant was in the amount of \$5,000 and was used to make improvements in the downtown area. Angela stated the event was planned for two days, however, they were rained out, so everything got done in a half a day. She reported this project could not have been done without the 80-90 volunteers, many corporate sponsors and several downtown business owners. Mr. Cook reported Angela was honored a few weeks in Indianapolis however they were not able to make the ceremony due to weather.

ACE Training Presentation

Councilman Franke introduced Sara Pessmeg and Susy Lenig, both counselors for the LaPorte Community School Corporation to give a presentation on Adverse Childhood Experiences. He stated he has taken this training and has found it to be very valuable and something the City may be interested in. Ms. Pessmeg and Ms. Lenig gave a brief explanation of this program and how they feel it could benefit the City which lasts about two hours and is free. They stated they believe we all need to be educated in order to make changes in our community and with awareness comes hope and change.

Mayor Dermody asked Councilman Franke to put something together for the Council to be able to hear this presentation.

Second & Final Reading of an Ordinance Amending Ordinance 18-2019 of the City of LaPorte, Indiana to Establish Salary for New Positions in the Department of Transportation and the Utilities Department

Councilman Galloway moved to read an Ordinance for the second and final time by title only; motion seconded by Councilwoman Feikes and unanimously carried. Councilman Galloway read an Ordinance Amending Ordinance 18-2019 of the City of LaPorte Indiana to Establish Salary for New Positions in the Department of Transportation and the Utilities Department by title only.

Mayor Dermody stated this Ordinance is amending the 2019 Salary Ordinance by deleting three positions and replacing them with new positions and pay schedule. He asked if there were any questions or comments.

Motion/Vote – Adopt Ordinance 5-2020

Councilwoman Feikes moved to adopt the Ordinance as presented; motion seconded by Councilman Franke and unanimously carried.

ORDINANCE 5-2020
ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 18-2019 OF THE CITY OF LAPORTE,
INDIANA TO ESTABLISH SALARY FOR NEW POSITIONS IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND THE UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

Other Business

Councilman Galloway stated the City is trying to expand our tax base and we currently have several properties off the tax roles that the City owns such as the Don George property and Tibma Bakery. He stated he has concerns with the 35 acres the School Corporation just acquired as it is also coming off the tax role. Councilman Galloway stated he believes the City should work with the School Corporation to see if we can get some of that property for building houses.

Mayor Dermody reported the Don George property will hopefully be developed here in the near future and the City is working on ideas for the Tibma Bakery property to have someone demolish the property and have affordable housing go there. Mayor Dermody stated hopefully in a few months we will be able announce some other housing opportunities for the City.

Mayor Dermody encouraged the Council to attend tomorrow night's School Board planning session meeting.

Mayor Dermody stated with Mr. Fruth present and the fact that he was heavily involved with City trees, he reported the Street Department has removed seventeen dead trees in the City. He advised there are approximately 75 stumps that need to be removed which will all be done this spring. Mayor Dermody stated there is still of work to be done but this is a great start.

Adjourn

There being no further business, Councilwoman Feikes moved to adjourn; motion seconded by Councilwoman Galloway and unanimously carried.

Approved: _____
Thomas P. Dermody, Mayor

Attest: _____
Courtney Parthun, Clerk-Treasurer

Approved: March 2, 2020