

## **Minutes of the General Government and Public Safety Committee for Monday, July 13, 2009.**

The meeting was called to order by Alderman Orsini at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Grenke, Aldermen Hensley, Simmons, Million, Bormann, and Parmeley. Also attending were Lynn Behrns, Fire Chief Marvin Rodgers, James Lee, Police Corporal Paul Morgan, and James Smith. Police Chief Larry Dudgeon arrived about twenty minutes into the meeting.

Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Alliance.

### Economic Development

Ginny Zoellers was absent, but Bormann presented a brief report of recent Chamber of Commerce and economic development activities: the Chamber plans to host a series of quarterly meetings to help merchants comply with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Experts from Columbia will speak. [After the meeting Behrns learned that the first session will be held on August 14 at noon.]

The Chamber Is also working to set up lectures and work sessions with the Small Business Administration to help local citizens explore how to set up a new small business. The Chambers will advertize the event and gauge potential attendance before set specific times and locations. Mayor Grenke said that he know of two citizens who could use such training and assistance to further their business ideas.

Zoellers has almost finalized the profit and loss totals for the Anchor Festival. Summarys of the Anchor Festival followup meeting have been prepared for the Chamber Board. They will try to address a few problems or suggestions each month through next year.

The Daughters of Union Veterans will dedicate a monument at the Centralia Battlefield site on September 27<sup>th</sup>. The Mayor will make short remarks. All aldermen are encouraged to attend. More information will be forwarded as available.

Behrns reported that Spring Garden was permanently closed, but the owners of the strip mall space are talking to several potential replacement tenants—all restaurants. James Smith asked if the City had ever sent utility debts to a collection agency or filed charges against such a customer. Behrns said that he was not aware of any such instance in his history, but none a business had never left with an unpaid bill of more than \$3,000. Mayor Grenke said he is discussing with City Attorney Beck and City Prosecutor Wilson whether civil or criminal action is warranted or likely to be productive financially. City Clerk Colvin is preparing list of outstanding business debts.

### Park Department

Minutes of the previous meeting of the Park Board have been distributed, as has the Annual Report of the Park and Recreation Department.. The Park Board will next meet on July 21. Note was made of the number of swimmers attending the Centralia swimming pool, even in a cooler-than-normal summer like last year's.

Simmons said she was very please to see high attendance at the new recreation center. Membership has already past 900, with the goal for the first year set at 1,600 members. This number seems very achievable, given that the facility is open to Centralia's entire trade area.

### Cemetery Advisory Committee

There was no formal report

### Tree Board

There was no written report.

### Library Board

Library Board minutes from its June meeting have been previously distributed. The next meeting will be on July 14, and an agenda was distributed.

### Finance

Financial statements for June were included in the Committee packet. Behrns reserved comment to later in the meeting.

The preliminary list of bills over \$1,250 were presented. Committee had no questions other than Orsini inquired about one long-distance phone call made to Georgia from the Police Department. She will receive an explanation from Chief Dudgeon later.

### Other General Government

Behrns said that he had reviewed the submission from Skirvin and Hilton showing suggested changes to improve access for the disabled in the downtown area.. He said the submission must have been a major task since it took three or four hours just to review. He has shared the information with Street Foreman Phil Hoffman and a couple of the suggestions have already been taken care of. A few others will be done soon. Some, he would like to discuss with Skirvin after she is back in town before taking any action or bringing them back to the Aldermen. Several also deserve input from nearby business..

Behrns distributed a memo from City Attorney Beck concerning a possible ordinance to deal with discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation. The memo includes the present Fair Housing Chapter from the City Code and the ordinances already adopted by five other Missouri cities. Beck believes that Centralia has the power to adopt such an ordinance. He thinks that changes in Federal law and court decisions will require a revision to the Fair Housing chapter in any case. The use of a commission as a judicial body will likely need amendment. Applying the additional categories of protected persons to the areas of job discrimination or public accommodations would have to be dealt with separately. Orsini noted that rules in Federal Chapter 7 do not apply to the extra criteria and that Missouri has not passed such an expansion of coverage, although it has been introduced in the legislature several times. Full discussion will be on the agenda at August Committee meeting and then hearings could be set if the Board decides to proceed.

Behrns said that preliminary property valuations are down from last year. Although real estate values are up, the increase was mostly from new construction. Values for existing real estate are about level. Valuations for personal property (mostly automobiles) is down by more than 12%. This creates a decline in the total. Behrns asked Committee guidance in how to set the proposed rate for taxes to be used in the required public notice and hearing. He see three options. He can keep the present rate and the City would realize about \$3,500 less than budgeted. He can increase the rate to yield same amount as last year. Or he can increase the rate to the maximum allowed by law, which would yield close to or a bit above budget numbers (since the formula for the cap allow taxes for old properties to yield the same amount, but the tax will also then be applied to new construction as additional revenue.) The adopted budget had assumed small growth in real property valuation and stable values for personal property. Behrns does not yet know what park and library officers will want. Certainly, the library will think about maximizing revenues, since property tax is almost

its only revenue source. Several aldermen leaned to keeping old rate and tightening further on expenditures. They then decided to wait until park and library wishes are known. Behrns said the difference for the general fund would only amount to a raise from 64.15 to about 65.61 cent per \$100 of assessed valuation. He needs a certified amount for new construction before he can be sure of the top rate. Bormann asked what the increase would be for a \$100,000. Behrns said that the increase would be about \$14.50 for \$100,000 is total value, but residential properties are assessed at 18% of appraisal, so a hypothetical home owner would have his taxes go up by \$2.61 for the house. The Board will discuss the matter more next week. An ad is necessary for the hearing held normally at the August Board meeting. Rates must be certified to the County Clerk before the end of August.

Behrns noted additional concerns he has about a broader revenue squeeze for the general fund.. If projected today, there would be noticeable shortfalls in sales tax, electric gross receipts taxes, gas and auto sales taxes, court fines, and interest revenues. Some of the trends may short-term fluctuations, but the total trend is not good. Behrns may suggest actions to be taken later, before the middle of the fiscal year in September. The trends have definite implications for next year, too.

Behrns distributed a final version of the proposed contract with Boone County to allow them to collect City property taxes. A new contract is necessary because state law changed payment calculator for how a portion of the taxes are given to the county assessor. The total amount has a cap, which was recently raised. The payment is applicable to all jurisdictions, so there is a very small effect to us. But the new county attorney decided to tweak other language, which then created a review by City Attorney Beck. The ordinance to approve the contract will be on the regular Board agenda. The Committee then discussion the need for the county to collect City taxes. Behrns give a very strong recommendation against going back to separate collections. The would involve a large expense and extra seasonal staffing, coupled with more personal property delinquencies and taxpayer dislike. And the assessor would still get the same percentage for his services.

As instructed last week, Behrns offered an overview of the recommendations in the auditor's management letter. He said the issue of the manner of to book lease-purchases is resolved, will the City will follow the guidance. City Clerk Colvin will meet with Jennifer of Williams-Keepers to discuss which aspects of the additional segregation of staff duties are really important and which are just nice if finances and staffing would allow. Behrns said he values economy and customer assistance (with oversight), more than total segregation, which would not make employee theft impossible. Colvin is also taking external and internal operating instructions for our financial software to see what is satisfactory to auditors. She will be showing examples of computer logging capabilities in the present software to determine where spot or full review is appropriate. Staff is still working on how to document programer changes done after hours. Behrns has also working on disaster recovery plan. They are easy to write, but he wants to pre-check each action with other parties who might be involved. Initial queries have been made to Lanet about use of its physical site to set up hardware. They already have total daily software backup. Vender lists and other information necessary for equipment purchases is being explored and documented. The written plan will be in a few months and presented to the audit for review before the end of the fiscal year. Purchasing policies and computer use policies are already mostly acceptable to the auditor. More discussion may be useful after Colvin's meeting.

As mentioned in the Missouri Municipal League newsletter and email, a new settlement has been agreed to between the Missouri cities and AT&T. It will mean corrected payments of back gross receipts taxes on telecommunications. AT&T has not had a strong service penetration in the Centralia area, but the same

terms may apply to other outstanding claims. The City will receive a claims form soon and will need to pass an approving ordinance in August. The payment to Centralia will only be about \$185, but the settlement carries to the future and the value of undisputed future tax payments may grow.

#### Fire Department

Chief Rodgers presented a report of Fire Department activities in May. Several calls were made for a wide variety of incidents. Joint training sessions on incident response are scheduled at the Centralia High School on Wednesday night.

Mayor Grenke and the Committee extended congratulations for another good July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks display, despite the rainy weather. The show did go on. Everyone reported good comments. The event is still an attraction for folks from Sturgeon, Hallsville, and even Columbia. The Committee discussed having a July 3 display, so firefighters can enjoy the holiday with families. As with similar suggestions in the past, Committee members favored maintaining tradition and having the display on July 4 unless there is a rain-out. Rodgers noted a problem of the late arrival of fireworks. Behrns said he will deal with this next year to avoid a recurrence.

#### City Prosecutor

No report to present.

#### Police Department

Chief Dudgeon presented a report of Police Department activities in May. Several major crimes occurred, including auto thefts by juveniles. Most have been solved and stolen properties recovered.

Dudgeon was asked about department access to drug-sniffing dogs. He said that presently he would ask for assistance from either the Boone County Sheriff's department or the Highway Patrol.

At a meeting attended by Chief Dudgeon, Behrns, and a MoDOT railroad safety officer, the group agreed that it would be best to make the intersection of Lakeview and Columbia into three-way stop, with no sign for west-bound traffic on Lakeview Street. Don Bagley was consulted and agreed. There was a brief discussion. Behrns will prepare an ordinance for Board action. He noted that east-bound buses would still have to stop at the tracks and would partially obstruct the intersection. There is no perfect solution; Dudgeon called it "convoluted at best".

Chief Dudgeon requested a longer probation period be set for new patrol officers--one year instead of six months. Behrns gave an opinion that a present City Code section allows the City Administrator or department head to set a longer probation when appropriate. The Committee agreed, however, that the break-in period for officers needed be as requested and would be best if specified directly in the Code. Behrns or City Attorney Beck will prepare an ordinance for August.

Dudgeon noted that one officer was being courted by an other law enforcement agency. If the officer is hired, Dudgeon will fill in only with part-timers. This would help with budget concerns.

With Alderman Parmeley present, Behrns renewed discussion of about designating one side of Denton Street to be a no-parking zone. Behrns said that could be done on the west, since the side has many driveways and garages, but it will not likely to make the street safer for neighborhood children. Parked cars act as "traffic calming" devices. A more open street improves the visibility of children, but probably

encourages faster traffic. Parmeley said he could see this drawback. Committee also discussed whether “Slow -- Children Playing” signs were useful. Behrns said that they quickly became part of a familiar background for those who drive the street frequently. They have no legal value and might actually give parents a false sense of security. Committee also talked about the use of permanent radar speed displays, but questioned their value compared to their cost. Behrns will try to get a cost range from Columbia.

Dudgeon suggested the use of warrant fees, to be used when defendants fail to appear in court. He show Committee members a list of outstanding warrants and said it was a growing problem. Such fees would reduce the police work load and may provide some extra revenue. Committee agreed that City Attorney Beck should look to drafting an ordinance that would impose this fee.

Dudgeon noted that the Wednesday fire training exercise would also have a police component, dealing with a response to an “armed attack” on the high school. Aldermen were invited to observe. (They could even be drafted to be “victims”).

#### Emergency Management

No formal report.

#### Protective Inspection

The hearing for the dangerous structure declaration of the Redwood Motel has been postponed to see if the sale of the property to another owner would come to pass. The prospective new owner has agreed to demolish a large part of the complex.

Behrns distributed a letter from Clifford de la Rose concerning the declaration of the Naragansett Building as a dangerous structure. The letter argued that he was complying with a court order and working according to a building permit. Committee agreed that he would be invited to make his case in person at the next Board meeting.

Behrns said that Community Block Grant funds for demolition of 105 N. Allen seem to be held up by a law suit from larger cities wanting a big piece of the pie.

Orsini said Behrns needs to inspect Bill Meador’s building on Railroad Street as soon as possible.

#### Other

Behrns said that Hannibal was gaining ground in its discussions about extending the wholesale power contract with Ameren Energy Marketing. It may be that a three-year addition will be possible at a slightly lower price than present, although such a contract would still have fuel cost and regulatory cost adders. Behrns said that he would put an ordinance up for the next agenda to allow Centralia to participate in a renewed agreement with Spiegel and McDiarmid for legal assistance if it becomes possible for the four or five wholesale cities to examine a good proposal..

Behrns distributed the list of recommendation made to the COLT Railroad Advisory Board and passed on the City of Columbia. The recommendations include closing the Sims Street crossing to automobile traffic or adding signals and cross arms. Committee did not like the choices, but acknowledged that the sidewalk grant could not proceed without an agreement to allow the sidewalk to be constructed on railroad right-of-way. Behrns said that MoDOT had promised to conduct traffic counts to determine actual Sims street usage. He will not suggest Board action until that information is available. Staff is proceeding with review of engineer

submissions of qualifications, but there is no rush for a selection and contract because the State has not yet authorized any expenditures on the project.

As May Arise

Behrns displayed a lengthy draft regulation to be considered by the Boone County Planning and Zoning Commission and then the County Commission. After several years of drafting, it sets forth the rules for stormwater control and management. Such controls are required by Federal law. They will not immediately apply to the City of Centralia, but will apply to Ashland because of a lawsuit. Columbia has similar rules. Centralia will be required to have them when it grows to 10,000 population. The County is welcoming comments. Behrns will forward the draft to the Board by email.

Grenke read an effusive letter from a couple who are moving to town and found the City to be very friendly and helpful. It thanked staff and officials for their help. Grenke also thanked and congratulated the police department on their recent efforts.

The Committee then adjourned at about 9:30 p.m.

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