

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

City of Hillsdale

March 6, 2023

7:00 P.M.

Regular Meeting

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Pro Tem Morrissey opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Mayor Pro Tem Morrissey called the meeting to order. Clerk Price took roll call.

Council Members present:

Greg Stuchell, Ward 1
Anthony Vear, Ward 1
William Morrissey, Ward 2
Bruce Sharp, Ward 3
Gary Wolfram, Ward 3
Robert Socha, Ward 4
Josh Paladino, Ward 4

Council Members absent:

Adam Stockford, Mayor
Cynthia Pratt, Ward 2

Also Present: Attorney Tom Thompson, Katy Price (City Clerk), Scott Hephner (HPD/HFD), Jake Hammel (BPU Electric), Alan Beeker (Planning Administrator), Jason Blake (DPS Director), Jessica Spangler (Library Director), Penny Swan, Doug Ingles, Brianna Crall, Jeremiah Regan, Melissa Desjardin, Elizabeth Schlueter, Catherine Timmis, Marie-Louise LaRue, Daniel LaRue, George Allen, Katy Caspar, Stephanie Myers, Lindy Jordan, Veronica Brooks, Ginger Novak, Kent Heise, Linda Fogarty, Edwin Fogarty, Elizabeth Webb, Caleb Spangler, Deb McClure, Jim Bowen, Jean Heise, Rev. Cathy Shively, Ginger Moore, Eric Moore, Nicole Hoffman, Barry Hill, Karen Hill, Tara Scott, Kevin Conant, Jeff Cooley and Carson Cooley.

Approval of Agenda

City Manager Mackie requested New Business Item C. Support of Lewis Emery Park Grant Submission for County Resolution be added along with Councilman Paladino's request for Introduction of Ordinance(s) item A. Amendment to Ordinance 2.48.020 in Chapter 2, Article IV, Division 7 Sec. 2-262. Proposal to strikeout: provided further, that one such member of the board of education of the Hillsdale community school.

Motion by Council Member Vear, seconded by Council Member Socha to add both amendments to the agenda.

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Council Member Vear, seconded by Council Member Socha to approve the agenda as amended.

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Paladino reviewed his proposed library board ordinance amendment.

Public Comment

Karen Hill, Library board acting president, commented in favor of the appointment of Dan LaRue. She gave brief overview of Mr. LaRue and the library board.

Penny Swan, Ward 4, shared displeasure of proposed ordinance amendment presented at the meeting. She is in favor of Mr. LaRue to the library board and thanked all the city workers for their hard work following the storm damage.

Jean Heise, 157 Budlong St., commented on library board appointment and questionable material potentially found in the library.

Elizabeth Schlueter, library patron, expressed opposition of Mr. LaRue to the library board and mentioned his potential online posting and decisive content on controversial issues.

Daniel LaRue, introduced himself to council, gave a brief background and stated he is currently appointed to the school board and the City's Zoning Board of Appeal and looks forward to potentially serving on the library board.

Liz Webb, library patron, is in support of Dan LaRue to the library board and expressed her displeasure of the attacks on him. She is strongly opposed to the ordinance amendment brought to council to remove a member of the Hillsdale community schools to the board.

Barry Hill, Ward 4, commented on the library appointment. Hill stated he served on many of the City boards and knows the issue of finding qualified people to serve on boards. Mr. LaRue is already a board member on the ZBA and doesn't understand why he is of question now as he has done a good job on the board. Hill shared his disapproval about the proposed ordinance amendment.

Edwin Fogarty, Ward 4, commented on the library board. He is in favor of Mr. LaRue to be appointed. He mentions that he is upset with the accusations about Mr. LaRue.

Jim Bowen, Ward 2, gave background on serving on the school board along with library board. Bowen mentioned there is a process already in place for objectionable material if found and to his knowledge there hasn't been anyone requests in the past 10 years. He is in favor of Mr. LaRue's appointment to the library and shared his discontentment about the proposed ordinance amendment.

Jeff Cooley, Ward 3, commented on library board appointment, and is in favor of Dan LaRue being appointed he urged council not to act on the proposed ordinance amendment.

Lindy Jordan, commented on library material and content at the library.

Brianna Crall, Ward 4, pleased to see library appointment on the agenda. But is disappointed about the controversy that is brought to council on this item. She mentioned Mr. LaRue is a great man and would be an asset on the library board.

Stephanie Myers, Ward 1, library board member, stated she also faced the same assumptions and opinions as Mr. LaRue prior to being appointed and is favor of him being appointed.

Jessica Franklin, Ward 3, mentioned Mayor Stockford's quote, "Hillsdale doesn't have to be like the rest of the country and be at each other's throats." Franklin spoke about Mr. LaRue's online posting.

Tara Scott, Ward 4, is in favor of Mr. LaRue's appointment for the library board.

Ginger Novack, is not in favor of Mr. LaRue to be appointed to the library board as he did not return a few responses from her when she reached out.

Lauryn Spencer, Ward 4, spoke in support of Dan LaRue for the library board appointment, she reported he is professional, polite and understanding in her dealings with him.

Melissa DesJardin, Ward 3, commented that she monitors her children and is not worried about what they look at in the library. Parents should monitor their children.

George Allen, Ward 4, commented that he hoped the vote of the library board appointment is not based off Mr. LaRue's character but off of primary considered of policy.

Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Bills
 - 1. City and BPU Claims of February 16, 2023: \$1,399,306.77
 - 2. Payroll of February 16, 2023: \$176,603.49
- B. City Council Minutes of February 20, 2023
- C. Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of February 20, 2023
- D. Pub and Grub Street Closure and Noise Variance Request
- E. HBA Open Air Market Use of Parking Lot Agreement

Motion by Council Member Socha, seconded by Council Member Sharp to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Roll call:

Council Member Paladino	Aye
Council Member Sharp	Aye
Council Member Socha	Aye
Council Member Stuchell	Aye
Council Member Vear	Aye
Council Member Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Morrissey	Aye

Motion passed 7-0

Communications/Petitions

- A. Hillsdale Municipal Airport Awarded \$2.5 Million FFA Grant
- B. Project Connect Event
- C. BPU Ice Storm Outage Restoration
- D. Comcast letter

Airport Manager Moore gave a brief overview of the \$2.5 Million in FFA Grant.

Melissa DesJardin from Hillsdale Community Thrift and Rev. Catherine Shively from King’s Kupboard reviewed the Project Connect event which includes 30 agencies.

Jake Hammel BPU Electric Director reported on the ice storm outage and restoration and thanked the crew and all the mutual aide crews that came to assistance this City.

Introduction and Adoption of Ordinances/Public Hearings

- A. Proposed Ordinance Amendment Ordinance 2.48.020 in Chapter 2, Article IV, Division 7 Sec. 2-262

Councilman Paladino proposed to amend the ordinance as follows: “The library board shall consist of five directors appointed by the mayor with the approval the city council, the directors to be chosen from the citizens of the city at large with reference to their fitness for office; provided, however, that not more than one member of the city council shall be a member of the library board at any one time.; ~~provided further, that one such member shall be a member of the board of education of the Hillsdale community schools.”~~

The amended ordinance would read: “The library board shall consist of five directors appointed by the mayor with the approval the city council, the directors to be chosen from the citizens of the city at large with reference to their fitness for office; provided, however, that not more than one member

of the city council shall be a member of the library board at any one time.

Council discussion ensued about the proposed amendment to the library board.

Motion by Council Member Sharp, seconded by Council Member Socha to send the proposed ordinance amendment to the Operation & Governance Committee for review.

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

A. Westwood Project Update

City Manager Mackie reported that the project was put out to bid in late January for a February 28th bid opening with construction starting this spring. The City received no bids for the project under the original specifications. The update details the City's plans to rebid the project with modifications, which should attract bids from capable general contractors.

No action taken.

New Business

A. Set Public Hearing for CRE Application : 3980 Property LLC

The Clerk's Office is in receipt of an "Application for Commercial Rehabilitation Exemption Certificate" for property located at 3980 West Carleton Road, Hillsdale, Michigan, owned by 3980 Property LLC. The application is for tax abatement on the rehabilitation of the property. The project has an estimated cost of \$805,000 to rehab the building to lease for commercial space.

Motion by Council Member Wolfram, seconded by Council Member Socha to set public hearing for April 3, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

B. Amend Capital Improvement Plan (Resolution)

Alan Beeker, Planning Administrator reported as part of Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008, the City is required to have a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that is updated annually. In addition to the City Master Plan, the CIP is a coordinated spending plan that helps the City implement the adopted Master Plan along with other long-range physical goals. After meeting with City Department Heads and consolidating information. The plan must be reviewed by the City Planning Commission and the public must have an opportunity to review the plan at a public hearing.

The City Planning Commission held a public hearing during their regular meeting on February 15, 2023. Following the public hearing, the Commission moved to send the 2023 Capital Improvement Plan to City Council with a recommendation to adopt.

Council Member Socha inquired about the IT department expenditures.

Motion by Council Member Socha, seconded by Council Member Sharp to approve the Capital Improvement Plan as presented with further information on the IT expenditures. **Resolution 3542.**

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

C. Support of Lewis Emery Park Grant Submission for County (Resolution)

Motion by Council Member Wolfram, seconded by Council Member Vear to approve the Resolution to support the Lewis Emery Park Grant Submission for the County. **Resolution# 3543.**

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Miscellaneous Reports

- A. Proclamation – None
- B. Appointments- Airport Advisory Committee – Matt Cheely, Planning Commission- Roma Rogers, Library Board- Daniel LaRue.

Motion by Council Member Sharp, seconded by Council Member Socha to approve Matt Cheely to the Airport Advisory Committee.

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Council Member Sharp, seconded by Council Member Socha to approve Roma Rogers to the Planning Commission.

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Council discussion ensued on Daniel LaRue to the library board and the oversight of boards and commissions.

Motion by Council Member Sharp, seconded by Council Member Vear to approve Daniel LaRue to the Library Board.

Roll call:

Council Member Vear	Aye
Council Member Wolfram	Nay
Mayor Pro Tem Morrisey	Nay
Council Member Paladino	Nay
Council Member Sharp	Aye
Council Member Socha	Aye
Council Member Stuchell	Nay

Motion Failed 3-4

C. Other- None

General Public Comment

Karen Hill, commented on the failed appointment for the library board. Stated that the library board has had a vacancy on the board since January. The library is a community library and not a private library and offers books that the community would like.

Daniel LaRue, stated he was disappointed about the decision of his library board appointment but thanked council for their time and consideration.

Barry Hill, shared his displeasure with council with the library board appointment decision. The community decides what books they want to read as they request them. He mentioned the City has bigger fish to fry than taking a board appointment and making it a big political deal out of the children’s section. Hill stated it’s embarrassing, he’s been proud of the City for a long time but this decision was ridiculous.

Edwin Fogarty, stated it is fear that seems to be the biggest motivation for the proposed library board appointment. Fogarty read from his notes “Banning books gives us silence when we need speech, it closes our ears when we need to listen, it makes us blind when we need sight, and what I see tonight is blindness”.

Tara Scott, commented that she was very disappointed about the library appointment that failed.

Rev. Catherine Shively, commented on her son and his husband and what they have negatively experienced over the years in Hillsdale. Hate, divisiveness and a holier than thou attitude. She stated she may not approve of the lifestyle but she approves of the fact that they are loved.

Penny Swan, commented on the library board and stated that it is unbelievable with what's going on with the library.

Nicole Hoffman, stated council overlooked the fact that a board functions on more than one person. They work together and vote on items as a whole. Public entities should have members with different ideas. Stated she was embarrassed with council's discussion on the library.

Lindy Jordan, thanked council for the good will shown by each of the people that made a good effort tonight and to continue to work towards the good.

Liz Webb, stated she spent her life handing children books it was her job she mentioned that nothing is wonderfully perfect about the classic books and their story lines, there is immorality, thievery in the church, murder in Shakespeare among other things. Webb thanked the three council members that voted for Mr. LaRue tonight.

George Allen commented that it is important to have board discussions and what does and does not belong in the library and it does matter what a person believes about these things. Allen believes council discharged their moral and ethical duties correctly.

City Manager's Report

None

Council Comments

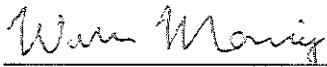
Council member Socha commented on the decline of the country.

Council member Sharp apologized the Mr. LaRue for what he experienced tonight.

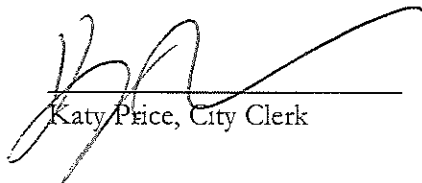
Adjournment

Motion by Council Member Vear, seconded by Council Member Socha moved to adjourn the meeting.

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:48 p.m.



William Morrissey, Mayor Pro Tem


Katy Price, City Clerk