

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

City of Hillsdale

May 6, 2024

7:00 P.M.

Regular Meeting

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Stockford opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Mayor Stockford called the meeting to order. Clerk Price took roll call.

Council Members present:

- Adam Stockford, Mayor
- Anthony Vear, Ward 1
- R Greg Stuchell, Ward 1
- William Morrissey, Ward 2
- Cynthia Pratt, Ward 2
- Bruce Sharp, Ward 3
- Gary Wolfram, Ward 3
- Robert Socha, Ward 4
- Joshua Paladino, Ward 4

Also Present: David Mackie (City Manager), John Lovinger (City Attorney), Katy Price (City Clerk), Jason Blake (DPS Director), Scott Hephner (Chief HCPD/HCFD), Mark Hawkins (HCFD Deputy Chief), Kim Thomas (Assessor), Brandon Janes (I.T.), Rebekah Dobski (Library Director), Doug Ingles (County Commissioner), Sheri Ingles, Ian Church, Andrew Gelzer, Martin Ricketts, Richard Smith, Scott Sessions, Joseph Hendee and CJ Toncray.

Approval of Agenda

Mayor Stockford asked to make an addendum to agenda, adding Communication items E. Ian Church Letter, F. Scott Sessions Letter, G. Dennis Wainscott County Cannon information, New Business F. MDOT AWOS Airport Contract.

Motion by Councilman Morrissey, support by Councilman Vear, to, add Communication items E. Ian Church Letter, F. Scott Sessions Letter, G. Dennis Wainscott County Cannon information, New Business F. MDOT AWOS Airport Contract.

All ayes. Motion carried.

Motion by Councilman Morrissey, support by Councilwoman Pratt, to approve the agenda as amended.

All ayes. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Joseph Hendee, 181 Rea St., thanked those on Council that didn't vote to approve the SAD Exemption for Mr. Church. Hendee stated that all that asks for SAD exemptions should be granted.

Scott Sessions, 102 Cold Springs Cir., read his Special Assessment letter aloud. He requested that his special assessment be stricken from the assessment roll and stated that was no standard or policy in place for exempting Mr. Church's property from the roll.

Martin Ricketts, 171 Westwood Dr., commented on his SAD letter and addressed his hardship.

Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Bills
 - 1. City and BPU Claims of April 11, 2024 - \$809,433.43
 - 2. Payroll of April 25, 2024 - \$189,366.74
- B. City Council Minutes of April 15, 2024

- C. Airport Advisory Committee Minutes of April 13, 2024
- D. Finance Minutes of April 15, 2024
- E. Cemetery Minutes of May 1, 2024
- F. Budget Work Session Minutes of April 22, 2024
- G. East St. Joe/Griswold Testing Services
- H. Right of Way Use: Shawn’s 5k Run for Cancer
- I. Hillsdale College Commencement Street Closure Agreement
- J. Hinkle/Adams Park Use Agreement
- K. Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy & Procedures
- L. July 3rd Fireworks Application
- M. Pub N Grub Event Street Closure
- N. HBA Summer in the City Sales/Car Show Event Street Closure
- O. Community Development Minutes of April 24, 2024

Motion by Councilman Morrisey, support by Councilwoman Pratt, to approve the Consent Agenda.

Roll Call:

Councilman Paladino	Aye
Councilwoman Pratt	Aye
Councilman Sharp	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Vear	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Stockford	Aye
Councilman Morrisey	Aye

Motion passed 9-0

Communications/Petitions

- A. 2022-23 Hillsdale Community Library Annual Report
- B. 2023 City Planning Commission Annual Report
- C. Special Assessment District 22-07 Letter
- D. Hillsdale County Commissioner Update – Doug Ingles
- E. Addendum: Church SAD Letter
- F. Addendum: Sessions SAD Letter
- G. Addendum: Wainscott Cannon condition on County Property

Rebekah Dobski, Library Director reviewed the Library Annual Report with Council.

Mr. Ricketts approached the podium for his special assessment letter.

Mayor Stockford stated that he voted against all special assessments presented to council. Council approved a Special Assessment policy on street work. Stockford reported he doesn’t like assessments and tax increases.

Mayor Stockford stated if there wasn’t any more council comments he will makes a motion to remove Ricketts property from SAD 22-07 Assessment roll.

Attorney Lovinger commented that the special assessment roll has been confirmed at the last meeting. The action item is not on the agenda and would create an open meetings act violation. Council could look into possibly reopening the public hearing process on special assessment roll for SAD 22-07. Lovinger stated Council may be treading on some thin water approving any forgiveness on assessments at this point.

Councilman Sharp commented that forgiving all the assessments will break the City. The special assessment funding was put in place to get the streets fixed. Local streets don’t get much funding from grants and other revenues. Sharp asked Mayor Stockford what other funding would work as he is against special assessments. Sharp mentioned the City income tax funding option was looked at and failed.

Stockford stated the Fair Committee looked into a street millage and the residents voted on it. He mentioned a city surplus and said the money is there to fix streets.

City Manager Mackie objected to Stockford's statement of the City having a surplus that would pay to fix the streets. Mackie clarified the amount of money in reserve would not fix the Westwood project and would be only enough to do one subdivision and then leave the City with no fund balance.

Councilman Stuchell reported council worked hard, there is not a tax that is passed that council doesn't pay themselves. Council members live in community as well and that government responsibility is infrastructure and the City has to repair and fix the streets and the special assessments are how to do it.

Councilman Sharp mentioned streets have been a council goal for years.

Councilwoman Pratt stated if you give an exemption for one you have to do it for all.

City Manager Mackie clarified the SAD public hearing process. Residents assessed would have to attend the public hearing or submit in writing for the public hearing assessment roll confirmation to be considered. Residents that were present at the scheduled hearing or submitted for consideration in writing prior to public hearing have the option to appeal to the state tax tribunal if assessment was not granted at the hearing. There should be no consideration after the approval of the Assessment roll and after the public hearing.

Councilman Vear commented residents need to speak with others in completed special assessment districts and see what they think about their new streets. Property values have increased and car repairs have decreased. He mentioned no one likes special assessments but the streets are being done. Vear is empathetic for those that struggle but there is some relief available with a poverty exemption not on special assessments but for property taxes. It would be a disservice to the people if council starts second guessing the course of action that has been taken to do the streets.

Length council discussion ensued.

Mayor Stockford told Mr. Ricketts he was sorry.

Commissioner Ingles did not have an update. Councilman Vear asked about status of moving the Courthouse Annex to the Lifeways currently. Ingles reported Commissioners are putting together a package for Lifeways and getting a floorplan on the building from Nathan Hall.

Dennis Wainscott commented on the cannon at the Courthouse. He will be attending the Commissioner meeting tomorrow to address it with the County but wanted to make Council aware of the poor condition of the cannon.

Mr. Church spoke on his SAD letter. His family was assessed \$8333.00 originally due to having multiple lots. He thanked Council for an exemption reducing his assessment and will be paying the remainder of the assessment for his two parcels.

Introduction and Adoption of Ordinances/Public Hearings

None

Old Business

None

New Business

A. Hillsdale Business Association Gaming License Approval

Clerk Price reported the Hillsdale Business Association has requested Council's approval to submit for a Gaming License from the State of Michigan for their Summer in the City event held on August 2, 2024 from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Motion by Councilman Sharp, support by Councilwoman Pratt, to approval Hillsdale

Business Association's request to submit for a gaming license from the State of Michigan for their Summer in the City event. **Resolution #3595.**

All ayes. Motion carried.

B. Hillsdale Renaissance Land Division Application

Kimberly Thomas, Assessor reported the owner of parcel number 30-006-227-285-18 has submitted a land division application. The current tax parcel includes all of lot 43 and the south part of lot 44, Block H, of the original Hillsdale Village plat. This property is part of the Historic, TIFA, and B-2 Central (Downtown) Business Zoning Districts.

Motion by Councilman Socha support by Councilman Vear, to approve the land division application from Hillsdale Renaissance.

All ayes. Motion carried.

C. Set Public Hearing for OPRA Application from GSG Generations LLC.

The City Clerk's Office is in receipt of an Application for Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Exemption Certificate for property located at 37 McCollum Street owned by GSG Generations, LLC. The application is for tax abatement on the rehabilitation of the former "Hillsdale Fire Department Engine House No. 1" building. The project has an estimated cost of \$500,000 in renovations to allow for retail space on the first floor and two residential apartment units on the second floor. Council is required to hold a public hearing and act on the application within 60 days of receipt. Staff recommends Council set a public hearing for May 20, 2024.

Motion by Councilman Sharp, support by Councilman Socha, to set a public hearing for May 20, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. for the OPRA application.

All ayes. Motion carried.

D. MDOT Trunk line Maintenance Contract Renewal (Resolution)

Jason Blake, DPS Director reported the state contracts with local agencies to provide maintenance on state highways that run through local jurisdictions. The City of Hillsdale currently has a contract with Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to perform those tasks on M-99 within the city limits. The new five (5) year contract will authorize the City to continue to perform this maintenance and receive compensation for that work. As part of the contract renewal process, MDOT requires a resolution be approved by the governing body specifying those officials authorized to sign the contract. All amounts and percentages are unchanged from the previous contract.

Motion by Councilman Sharp, support by Councilman Morrisey, to approve the renewal for the MDOT Trunk line Maintenance Contract and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to sign resolution. **Resolution #3596.**

All ayes. Motion carried.

E. MDOT Drain Repair

Jason Blake, DPS Director reported In accordance with the City of Hillsdale's Trunkline Maintenance Contract with Michigan Department of Transportation, the City has obtained a Transportation Work Authorization (TWA) to repair two storm water catch basins located within the south bound deceleration lane of Krogers Plaza (290 W. Carleton Rd.), both storm water catch basins need major repairs in addition to adjacent lane repairs due to pavement settling/sinking. DPS solicited three quotes for repairs and submitted to MDOT for review and approval. MDOT has approved Concord Excavating as a subcontractor of the City of Hillsdale to make all necessary drain repairs. The City of Hillsdale will be providing and installing all required traffic control for the project. City expenditures will be reimbursed by MDOT.

Motion by Councilman Sharp, support by Councilwoman Pratt, to award the storm water drain repairs, located at 290 W. Carleton Rd to Concord Excavating in the amount of \$23,319.00.

Roll Call:

Councilwoman Pratt	Aye
Councilman Sharp	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Vear	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Stockford	Aye
Councilman Morrissey	Aye
Councilman Paladino	Aye

Motion passed 9-0

F. MDOT AWOS Airport Contract 2024-0488 (Resolution)

City Manager Mackie stated the 20-year contract is for the installation, operation and maintenance of the Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS) utilized by the Airport to enhance aviation safety and efficiency. The contract costs the Airport less than \$2,000 per year.

Motion by Councilman Socha, support by Councilman Stuchell, to approve the MDOT AWOS Contract 2024-0488 and authorize the City Manager and City Clerk to sign on behalf of the City. **Resolution #3597.**

Roll Call:

Councilman Sharp	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Vear	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Stockford	Aye
Councilman Morrissey	Aye
Councilman Paladino	Aye
Councilwoman Pratt	Aye

Motion passed 9-0

Miscellaneous Reports

A. Proclamations – Arbor Day

Mayor Stockford read proclamation aloud declaring May 10, 2024 as Arbor Day in the City of Hillsdale.

B. Appointment- None

C. Other- None

General Public Comment

Richard Smith, 63 S. Broad St. stated he will speak with American Legion at the next meeting and see if he can look into getting the cannon cleaned up at Courthouse.

Dennis Wainscott, 34 Garden St., commented that Daughters of the American Revolution is interested in helping restore the cannon. He also stated he was having issues with growing grass in front yard after his street was done.

Joseph Hendee, 181 Rea St., commented that the mayor was against special assessments and also appointed nonresidents to the BPU board at one time. He stated he thinks it's unfair that limited income residents and senior citizens are being assessed to fix the streets.

Scott Sessions 102 Cold Springs Cir., addressed the Mayor's comment on the Fair Committee. The Committee's recommendation was 3.0 millage to be included in the 2016-17 budget to offset the cost (\$370,000) of the street completion of Rippon Ave, Garden, Mead and Vine St.

Jennifer Wortz addressed Council and introduced herself as she is running for State Representative for the 35th district.

City Manager Report

City Manager David Mackie stated Meijer Store is opening May 14, 2024. The staff have been a pleasure to work with and have been a class act.

The budget workshops were done last month. The proposed budget and audits are on the website under the Finance department, residents and public can view the reports.

Mr. Mackie spoke on funds and the special assessments districts.

Council Comment

Councilman Sharp asked council to view the Westwood project. The contractor is doing a great job and everything is going smoothly.

Councilwoman Pratt asked if Council was going to the Meijer walk through.

Councilman Paladino has been receiving reports of deer ticks on children and residents walking on the sidewalks, etc.

Councilman Socha commented on the Special Assessment exemption and stated no one likes taxes or assessments. He did a rundown of budget and stated there isn't any extra funds. Council and staff are looking for ways to get the streets and infrastructure fixed to secure the wellbeing of the City.

Adjournment

Motion by Councilmember Sharp, seconded by Councilmember Socha to adjourn the meeting.

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.



Adam Stockford, Mayor



Katy Price, City Clerk