

The City Council of the City of Du Quoin
Minutes of the Monday, November 9, 2020

Minutes:

The Minutes of the City Council of the City of Du Quoin, County of Perry, held on this 29th day of November in the year 2020, said meeting held in the Council Chambers of the Du Quoin City Hall.

Invocation:

City Attorney Aaron Atkins gave the invocation and Mayor Alongi led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Call to Order:

Mayor Alongi called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following individuals attending: Commissioners Jill Kirkpatrick, Charles Genesio, Michael Ward, and Bob Karnes. City staff present included City Attorney Aaron Atkins and City Clerk Ruth Hale.

Approval of Minutes:

The Council approved the revised Open Session Council minutes of the September 28th meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Karnes **Second:** Commissioner Kirkpatrick

Ayes: All **Nays:** None

The Council approved the Open Session Council minutes of the October 26th meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Karnes **Second:** Commissioner Ward

Ayes: All **Nays:** None

The Council approved the release of the Executive Session Council minutes of the August 12, 2019, November 12, 2019, December 23, 2019, and September 28, 2020 meetings, and retained the minutes from the February 11, 2019 and July 8, 2019 meetings.

Motion: Commissioner Karnes **Second:** Commissioner Kirkpatrick

Ayes: All **Nays:** None

Treasurer's Report:

N/A

Approval of Bills to be Paid:

The Council approved payment of the bill list.

Motion: Commissioner Karnes **Second:** Commissioner Kirkpatrick

Ayes: All **Nays:** None

Public Agenda:

Discussed the Possibility of Purchase of Vacant Lot at the South Corner of the intersection of West Poplar St. with South Hickory St. – Final Opinions. The council were in unanimous agreement that this is not the time to make a purchase of this type. If the financial situation improves, the City can revisit purchasing the lot next year if it is still available.

Guests:

Mr. Kurt Harris, Esq., addressed the Council on the proposed oil & gas lease currently before the Council. He was adamantly opposed to the lease.

Mr. Matthew Benson, Esq., addressed the Council on the proposed oil & gas lease currently before the Council. He was adamantly opposed to the lease and the contract language contain therein.

Mr. Larry Roberts, City Lake Association, addressed the Council on the proposed oil & gas lease currently before the Council. He spoke on behalf of the residents of the City Lake and the Lake Association. They were also opposed to the lease.

Ms. Carla White spoke of the beauty of the City Lake and expressed her concern for anything negative happening to the lake. She stated that Kendale Acres residents take care of their road and she would hate to see it torn and damaged.

Mr. Scott Opp, property owner around the lake and farmer, has a lease with Mr. Reimer. He stated it is not his intention to harm the environment. He has a large investment in land for farming and he is going ahead with his lease with Mr. Reimer. He does not want to hurt anyone or any of the environment.

Mr. Doug Bishop, City Engineering, brought a Point of Order to clarify that the City of Du Quoin had indeed oil and chipped the Kendale Acres road last year, not the residents. He personally supervised the process.

Mr. Kevin Reimer provided a rebuttal to some of the points brought before the council concerning the lease. He Understands the concerns about the environment. He thinks the parties should get together with his attorney to attempt to get past concerns. He is still willing to work to come up with a lease to satisfy all interested parties.

The Mayor thanked Mr. Reimer. He then addressed the Lake residents and explained the resources the City puts into City Lake maintenance. He discussed the revenue shortfalls this year and ask for assistance to come up with a plan to help offset the costs of the road maintenance. He stated that the City has invested a large amount of funds to get the Dam up to code and has done more for the City Lake in the last five years than previous administrations combined. He said the residents need to realize what asset the City has in the Lake and try to find a source of revenue to have that lake maintained. When you have an asset and you can't afford it, you have to make tough decisions. He appealed to residents to help find the revenue to offset the \$65,000 cost of maintaining City Lake roads.

He spoke of the hard decisions facing us. The City has suffered a loss of revenues due to the shut down. We cannot continue to take hit with a \$90,000 in police and fire pension increase that wasn't budgeted. The City has to make the decision to freeze non-union salaries and to not replace a recent fire fighter that retired. At this time, he will not allow the city to get into financial distress. Budget cut are needed, and possibly layoffs and a property tax increase. It would be a 15.8% tax increase. He doesn't want to do it during a pandemic. But it has torn down everything that the City has done for the financial situation in the last five years. Asking to cut budgets that can't be cut anymore. It is possible a fire truck is needed 4-5 years down the road. And the EPA wants an ultra-violet system installed at the Water Treatment Plant asap. He said making these cuts are just one piece of the puzzle.

Commissioner Karnes said if the alternative is layoffs, then we need to take steps. No one wants to do it but we have to take steps.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick asked if an ordinance to freeze salaries was necessary.

Aaron Atkins indicated that since salaries of non-contract employees are set by ordinance, an ordinance is needed.

Commissioner Ward said this is a very hard time. Two if the finest departments are our Police and Fire. The PD worked through the pandemic, not from home. When layoffs are discussed, everything that is being spent needs looked at before laying off. Hopefully this will be taken care of when the economy gets better.

Commissioner Genesio stated that it will be tight but Water and Water Treatment can make cuts. He said he will not vote to layoff anyone. The City needs to find an answer.

Ordinances:

A. 2020-O10-02: An Ordinance for and Oil and Gas Lease was tabled and no vote was taken. The Ordinance will not be revisited in the near future.

2020-011-01: An Ordinance Freezing Salaries for Non-Union Employees (Final Approval)

Motion: Commissioner Karnes **Second:** Commissioner Genesio

Ayes: All – Mayor voted with regret. **Nays:** None

2020-011-02: An Ordinance Authorizing the Sale of Real Estate (Final Approval)

Motion: Commissioner Kirkpatrick **Second:** Commissioner Karnes

Ayes: All **Nays:** None

2020-011-03: An Ordinance Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Personal Property (Final Approval)

Motion: Commissioner Genesio **Second:** Commissioner Karnes

Ayes: All **Nays:** None

Resolutions:

A. 2020-RI1-01: A Resolution Adopting a Budget for Du Quoin Tax Increment Financing Districts #1, #2, and #3 for 2021 Revenues Collected in 2020 (Public Display). Jeff Ashauer addressed the Council to explain the budget. He also acknowledged Ruth Hale, Aaron Atkins, Doug Hill, Denny George, and Bob Markitay for their support and willingness to always help him when called upon.

Motion: Commissioner Kirkpatrick **Second:** Commissioner Karnes

Ayes: All **Nays:** None

B. 2020- RI1-03: A Resolution Adopting an Organizational Chart for the City of Du Quoin for Information Only (Final Approval). The Resolution was tabled until further revision is considered.

Other Business:

Beginning next week, due to Governor Pritzker’s order regarding mitigation efforts for COVID-19, meeting attendance at the council meetings will decrease from 25 to 10. There have been 17 straight days of higher than an 8% positivity rate in testing for the virus.

Commissioners’ Comments:

Genesio- Wants everyone to be safe and try to protect themselves and their families.

Ward- Asked for continued prayers for everyone to get through this time.

Kirkpatrick- Agreed with the previous statements of the commissioners.

Karnes-Commended everyone for wearing a mask. Prayers for everyone and asked that the do all they can do to get through this thing.

Mayor-.

Public Comment:

The Mayor asked if anyone wished to address the council at 8:10 pm.

Ms. Joyce Poole addressed the council regarding the property that was recently placed for bid and purchases approved by the Council. She was opposed to one of the properties being sold and stated she had a vested interest. However, she did not provide proof of the interest.

Public comment closed at 8:21 pm.

Adjournment:

The City Council adjourned at 8:22pm.

Motion: Commissioner Karnes **Second:** Commissioner Kirkpatrick

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruth E. Hale". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Ruth Hale, City Clerk