



**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF THE
CITY OF NEOGA
HELD IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, MUNICIPAL BUILDING
533 CHESTNUT AVENUE, NEOGA, IL
JANUARY 8, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Helm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Those present were Commissioners Williams, Schabbing, Letizia, and Mayor Helm. Commissioner Edwards was absent. Others present were City Clerk Brenda Evans, City Treasurer Diana Foor, Police Chief Andy Schabbing, Ken Meinhart, Joe Meinhart, and Doug Jackson.

MINUTES

After reviewing the regular and executive session minutes from December 26, 2023, Commissioner Schabbing made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. Ayes, Commissioner Schabbing, Williams, and Mayor Helm. Commissioner Letizia abstained. Nays, none. Motion carried. 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

NEOGA DAYS 2024

Doug Jackson, Chairman of the Neoga Days Committee, updated the council on the upcoming activities that the Neoga Days committee has been planning. Jackson said this year Neoga Days will be May 23-26th. This year the committee is planning on moving the beer tent to the parking lot at the Neoga Community Center so that it is closer to the pavilion. They will have a lot of the same activities as last year, with the parade starting at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday. Also added will be a 5K and breakfast on Saturday morning. The inflatables will open at noon on Saturday as well. There will also be Sunday morning church services, and a foam pit for the kids Sunday afternoon. Jackson said the committee is excited to bring more activities. Jackson also said that the committee will be doing a fundraiser on February 3rd by having a comedy night. Doors will open at 5pm with a comedian and a live band. The committee is requesting a special event liquor license. Evans said that she will have it on the next agenda, but the mayor can approve the license before the meeting. Mayor Helm said that he would be willing to approve the special event liquor license. Evans asked Jackson to forward the liquor bond and insurance to her as soon as possible.

No other public comments were heard.

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS, MAYOR HELM

TOTAL GRAIN MANAGEMENT (TGM) EXPANSION

Ken Meinhart from Total Grain Management, explained to the Council that they have discussed with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Canadian National Railroad (CN) different options for an entrance and exit of truck traffic off Rt. #45 at the entrance of TGM. The proposal was to install gates at the railroad crossing on Rt #45 as well as a gate at their entrance. It would also widen the entrance so traffic can exit going north and stay in the northbound land. This will allow traffic to move in and out of TGM is property safely and within the guidelines of the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). Meinhart did say that he has not received a written approval of this request, but he has received verbal approval. Another change to the plans for the expansion was Decatur & Easter Illinois Railroad (WATCO) will not be able to pull the train cars to the north as proposed, due to two (2) bridges that cannot handle the weight of the train. Now they will have to move the train cars onto the CN railroad. This brought on another concern from the Council as to how long the crossing at 5th, 6th, and 7th Street would be blocked. According to Meinhart, he didn't think it would be more than 60 minutes, which is better than the 90 minutes it now takes. This was a concern for the Council due to any emergency vehicles needing to respond to a call on that side of town. Mayor Helm said that if all the crossing were closed, fire, police, and ambulance vehicles would need to go out of town to get around the train. After an extensive discussion it was the consensus of the Council to have TGM talk with WATCO about the timeline for moving train cars.

TOTAL GRAIN MANAGEMENT TIF APPLICATION

City Clerk Evans presented a TIF application from TGM in the amount of \$1,079,081. Evans explained the funds requested would be for acquiring the ground behind their property. This is where the rail spur would be placed, and trucks would be staged to unload. Ken Meinhart, along with Joe Meinhart explained that the TIF funds would be used for land acquisition of \$587,100, architectural expense \$92,081, and driveway rehab / demolition of \$400,000. Meinhart explained that TGM would be investing over \$15,000,000 in the project. Ken Meinhart said that Neoga TGM had a 15,760,704-bushel volume in 2023, and if the market stays up for oversea demand, TGM is projecting around 20,000,000 bushels by 2030. The expansion would increase property taxes to each of the taxing districts in Cumberland County, including the city. Meinhart also mentioned that as of the last taxing year, TGM has paid over \$1,000,000 into the TIF account. The council could see the benefits of the expansion, but their real concern was having the crossings blocked for an extended period. Mayor Helm asked that TGM talk with WATCO and bring back a plan on how to avoid a major problem if all the crossings are blocked.

NEOGA FIRE PROTECTION TIF APPLICATION

City Clerk Evans presented a TIF application from the Neoga Fire Protection District. The Council asked if the fire district paid taxes into the TIF. Evans explained that they do not; however, they would have gotten tax dollars if the city had not had a TIF district. Commissioner Williams said that he wouldn't have a problem giving them some TIF money, but not 100%. Mayor Helm said that the fire department does have the opportunity to apply for grants as well. After a brief discussion, Commissioner Williams made a motion to have a contract drawn for \$32,034. The motion was

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seconded by Commissioner Letizia. Ayes, Commissioner Williams, Schabbing, Letizia and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.

WORKMAN REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS, LLC TIF APPLICATION

City Clerk Evans gave the Council a TIF application from Mel Workman on behalf of Workman Real Estate Holdings, LLC. Evans explained that Mr. Workman has applied for \$275,741 to rehab the building at 589 Chestnut Avenue. Evans also informed the council that Mr. Workman is planning to put a coffee shop on the south side of the building and a steak house on the north side. Mayor Helm said that he thought the building was condemned, and he would like to see a structure inspection done on the building before any TIF money is given to the project. Commissioner Williams said he feels Workman knows what he is doing, or he wouldn't invest over a million dollars into the building. Commissioner Schabbing said that Mr. Workman has done the same type of project in Sullivan with an old building there. Commissioner Letizia said that he didn't have a problem giving Workman the full \$275,741, because Workman will be investing \$1,287,167 plus employing people and bringing in sales tax dollars. After a brief discussion on the proposed businesses and TIF request, Commissioner Letizia made a motion to have a contract drawn up with Workman Real Estate Holding, LLC for \$275,741. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. Ayes, Commissioner Letizia, Williams, Schabbing, and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.

TEXT AMENDMENT FOR C1 ALLOWING BOWLING ALLEYS

City Clerk Evans informed the Council that Mel Workman has purchased the old grocery store. He is planning to put in a bowling alley; however, it is not zoned for a bowling alley in C1 zoning. Mayor Helm said that he doesn't believe that alcohol will be able to be served at that location due to the church behind the property. City Clerk Evans told the Council that if they would like to make a text amendment change to allow for a bowling alley, all they had to do was change the zoning ordinance. Commissioner Schabbing made a motion to proceed with changing the zoning ordinance to allow for a bowling alley. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Letizia. Ayes, Commissioner Schabbing, Letizia, Williams, and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.

CHANGE SANITATION COMPANY

City Clerk Evans explained to the council that she is having problems with Waste Management, who is currently servicing the city's sanitation services. Evans said that the city agreed to pay \$140 per month for three (3) dumpsters, and the trash barrels downtown to be emptied on a regular basis. Evans explained that the barrels are not being picked up for weeks at a time, and the dumpster at the Community Center has been charged an extra \$175 each week that the lid is not closed. Evans said there are times that the lid was open only a couple of inches, and they charged \$175. With that being said, Evans stated that she would like to have Sanitation Services from Effingham start removing the trash at all city properties. Evans also mentioned that Waste Management has had numerous issues with billing. Evans said that she is contacting them every month because the bills are not correct. Commissioner Williams said that he had worked for the company, and it will be very difficult to get out of the contract, however, Williams made a motion to switch sanitation companies from Waste Management to Sanitation Services. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schabbing. Ayes, Commissioner Williams, Schabbing, Letizia, and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.

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ORDINANCE #1082-01-24 An Ordinance Authorizing a Variance in Accordance with Appendix B of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Neoga, in the County of Cumberland, and State of Illinois (Variance of East Rear Yard Setback – Grag Oakley and Cathy Oakley)

After reviewing the ordinance, Commissioner Letizia made a motion to accept the ordinance as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. Ayes, Commissioner Letizia, Williams, Schabbing, and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.

ORDINANCE #1083-01-24 An Ordinance Authorizing a Variance in Accordance with Appendix B of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Neoga, in the County of Cumberland, and State of Illinois (Variance of Size Accessory Structure – Preston Robinson and Hannah Robinson)

After reviewing the ordinance, Commissioner Letizia made a motion to accept the ordinance as presented. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. Ayes, Commissioner Letizia, Williams, Schabbing, and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.

ORDINANCE 1084-01-24 An Ordinance Creating the Economic Development Committee

After reviewing the ordinance, Commissioner Letizia made a motion to approve the ordinance as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schabbing. Ayes, Commissioner Letizia, Williams, Schabbing, and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.

SANCTUARY CITY

City Clerk Evans informed the Council that many communities are discussing immigration issues and presenting an ordinance or resolution stating that the communities were not a sanctuary city. City Clerk Evans explained that Neoga or Cumberland County does not have the resources to handle any immigration residents. After a brief discussion, Commissioner Williams made a motion to proceed with an ordinance or resolution regarding illegal immigration. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schabbing. Ayes, Commissioner Williams, Schabbing, Letizia, and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.

FINANCE, COMMISSIONER SCHABBING

TREASURER'S REPORT

After reviewing the treasurer's report, Mayor Helm ordered that the treasurer's report be filed in the City Clerk's records.

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PUBLIC PROPERTY, COMMISSIONER LETIZIA

RENEWAL OF NEOGA BUCKS LEASE

City Clerk Evans asked the Council if they would be interested in extending a lease to the Neoga Bucks Club. Commissioner Williams said that he feels the Neoga Bucks are a great group, and the city should renew their lease. Commissioner Letizia agreed. Commissioner Williams made a motion to renew the lease with Neoga Bucks as is. Commissioner Letizia seconded by motion. Ayes, Commissioner Williams, Schabbing, Letizia, and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.

NEOGA DAYS COMMITTEE LEASE

Commissioner Letizia made a motion to draft a lease agreement for the Neoga Days Committee for \$100 per month. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. Ayes, Commissioner Letizia, Williams, Schabbing, and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.

HOTEL FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT

City Clerk Evans informed the council that the hotel feasibility study has been completed and looks very favorable for a 45 to 50 room hotel. Evans said she would keep them updated on any prospects.

POLICE DEPARTMENT REMODEL

Chief Schabbing explained to the council that the police department building needs remodeling. Schabbing said that the flooring is starting to peel up. He is also concerned about the security of the building. Schabbing asked if the council would entertain the idea of a complete remodel. It was the consensus of the council to proceed with obtaining estimates to remodel the building.

STREETS AND ALLEYS, COMMISSIONER EDWARDS

No report was given.

HEALTH AND SAFETY, COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS

No report was given.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Williams made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schabbing. Ayes, Commissioner Williams, Schabbing, Letizia, and Mayor Helm. Nays, none. Motion carried. 4-0.