

**MINUTES**  
**September 20, 2016**  
**Committee of the Whole**  
**City of Batavia**

Please **NOTE:** These minutes are not a word-for-word transcription of the statements made at the meeting, nor intended to be a comprehensive review of all discussions. They are intended to make an official record of the actions taken by the Committee/City Council, and to include some description of discussion points as understood by the minute-taker. They may not reference some of the individual attendee's comments, nor the complete comments if referenced.

Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

**1. Roll Call**

**Members Present:** Chair Brown; Ald. Russotto, Stark, Chanzit, Wolff, Fischer (entered at 7:31pm); O'Brien, Mueller, Botterman, Cerone, and McFadden

**Members Absent:** Aldermen Atac, Callahan, Hohmann

**Also Present:** Mayor Schielke (entered at 7:33pm); Chief Schira, Batavia Police Department; Laura Newman, City Administrator; Howard Chason, Information Systems Director; Billy Kellum, Assistant Street Superintendent; and Jennifer Austin-Smith, Recording Secretary

**2. Items to be Removed/Added/Changed**

There were no items to be removed, added or changed.

**3. Matters From the Public (For Items NOT on Agenda)**

Mike Hogan, Wilson Street Tavern, asked the Committee to reconsider the video gaming ordinance. He stated that he has talked to several business owners and they would like the City to revisit this discussion. Brown stated that he has been in support of video gaming and he would entertain the idea to have the conversation again. We need to be competitive with the surrounding communities and it could be a revenue source for the City. O'Brien stated that he supported it when it came up originally and he supports it now. It is a revenue source for our businesses. Mayor Schielke stated that it is the Council's decision, however, he has heard from other mayors that establishments are disappointed with the revenue and it is not what they thought it would be. Botterman asked for this to be revisited again during the budget process. O'Brien seconded. Chanzit requested information on what has changed since the last time we voted on this other than a request by one person. There are some material facts that have not changed.

**4. Discussion: Revisit Crosswalk Safety Concerns Following Fatal Accident in Mount Prospect GS**

Chief Schira reported that the flashing beacons were installed in August 2015 and they have looked at all crosswalk accidents since August 2015. There were two crosswalk accidents but neither were at the flashing beacons. One was at South Raddant and Wind Energy and the other was at Route 31 and McKee.

Chief Schira stated that crosswalks across four lane highways are much different than crosswalks across two lanes. We don't think it is wise to put crosswalks along four-lane highways period because there are a lot of blind spots. The Mount Prospect accident is a perfect example. The crosswalk itself has been in for ten to fifteen years. Only in the last year they put in a flashing beacon and a median to increase the safety measures. Tragically, a car did not see past another car (which was stopped) and kept going through the crosswalk. Mount Prospect has been since allowed to put a flashing light on the median as well. Chief Schira stated that as far as a crosswalk is concerned, someone standing on the sidewalk and has not entered the crosswalk there is no expectation or responsibility for motorists to stop. The responsibility to stop is only when someone enters the crosswalk. By law, unless the person steps off the curb into the crosswalk there is no mandatory duty for motorists to stop. When people believe that activating the amber flashing beacon means people would stop gives them a false sense of security. Chief Schira continued that people are not trained as motorists to stop at flashing yellow lights, that is a caution or a warning. That means be careful. You stop at reds. It makes much more sense to him to have a flashing red light or a solid red light than an amber light.

Chief Schira discussed the Hawk Signal, which is mounted across the intersection, and has been proven safe and effective in other states. The Hawk Signal works as a traffic signal where it goes to a flashing yellow and then to a red. That time delay helps prevent cars from being rear ended. Mount Prospect is interested in installing a Hawk signal, however, IDOT does not allow for Hawk Signals. Chief Schira found out from Mount Prospect that IDOT feels that drivers are trained to stop when a traffic signal is out and they don't want people to stop at the Hawk Signal when it is not activated. IDOT thinks that it would confuse drivers.

O'Brien stated that IDOT has to reevaluate their standards. Chief Schira stated that he would recommend starting to have discussions with IDOT to have them reconsider the Hawk Signal on State highways. He suggested having the Mayor contact IDOT and join with Mount Prospect to put legislative pressure on IDOT. Chief Schira stated that he would work with the chief of the Mount Prospect Police Department. Chanzit queried if we have enough data at this time. He continued that if we do not find the crosswalk to be safe we should take down the flashing beacons. He stated that he does not want a fatality to occur in our City and if we were to vote tonight he would vote to take it down. Botterman stated that from his perspective he has seen these crosswalks work as they were designed to do. He too does not want to see anyone get hurt but at Morton the crosswalk has been working. Pedestrians still have to utilize discretion and judgment prior to entering the crosswalk and drivers do need to be alert and aware of their surroundings. Unless we have some other plan to increase safety we should not take the lighted crosswalks out at a whim. Brown stated that we don't have the data for how many near misses there were or how many times the crosswalk has helped increase safety. Wolff suggested creating a demonstration on how to use the crosswalk and air it on BATV. He also suggested crosswalk education at all the schools for children to learn as well. Stark stated that education is a good initiative from now until spring. We should have a road safety program developed prior to spring.

Brown stated that IDOT should be lobbied and the City should work with Mount Prospect to get the Hawk Signal approved. McFadden agreed. O'Brien asked that staff put something together regarding a road safety program to implement citywide.

#### **5. Proposal to Hire a Communications Coordinator (Laura Newman 9/16/16)**

Newman reported that one of the first tasks as a City Administrator was to review if it were advantageous for the City to have a position that was dedicated to communications. Newman stated that it is a resounding yes. She has seen several instances in which a Communications Coordinator would have been beneficial to the City. Chason stated that he spends ten to twenty percent of his time on the website. We do push information from our website to Facebook and Twitter but unfortunately it is not the best looking posts. Unless someone does it manually the format could not be altered. Chason stated that Geneva has someone to post the information manually. Chason stated that he does not believe that we have all the information needed on the website and it would be nice to have someone monitoring that as well as monitoring the website for accuracy. Chason stated that our City Administrator spends a lot of time following up with communication. He stated that a communications position would be extremely helpful to the City.

Chanzit stated that it would be helpful to the City to get resident's approval of receiving push notifications when construction or other items are happening in their neighborhood. Chanzit commented that a person with a journalism background would be ideal for the communications position. He suggested having the salary be high enough to attract quality applicants. Wolff stated that he supports this position. The school district brought in someone to do communications and it has been very beneficial. Russotto and McFadden were in favor of this position. Botterman asked if this position would be working with the police department as well. Newman stated that this position would be used to assist the police department in communications, such as with press release formats. Botterman stated that he hopes this position won't spend too much time on Facebook but rather pushing information ahead of the story, which could make all the difference.

O'Brien stated that the Council worked really hard on the budget and he would be opposed to a budget amendment now and we should discuss this at the next coming budget. Chason stated that if this does pass now and there is an amendment, we are not looking to hire anyone until after thanksgiving or Christmas. It would probably be a small budget amendment for the first month of salary and would get us going starting the New Year. Stark would like to get started on this process because it is very important to get the right information out there. Brown and Botterman agreed with O'Brien. Brown stated that he truly feels that this should be a part of the budget discussion because we have not yet heard from staff on which areas they need help. He feels that the job description is a lot for one person. Brown stated that the communications person would have to attend the City Council and the COW meetings and be a part of the process so they know what to communicate. Brown stated that we need to fully understand the budget and what we can or cannot afford before we fill this position. Fischer stated that he supports the hiring of this position and the range of salary proposed. Botterman encouraged the City to make the salary equivalent to the work because you get what you pay for with this type of work. Botterman asked if the City has considered a contract worker for this, free of full-time benefits. Newman stated that the City felt that it would be more beneficial to have a salaried position versus an hourly contract employee. Mueller stated that she feels that this position is necessary but our budget was very tight. We need to understand all of the other obligations the City needs for the next budget.

Mueller stated that information does need to get out there more quickly and more accurately. Cerone stated that our staff is overworked and this position helps every department at a relatively low cost and he supports it.

**Motion:** To direct staff to begin the search process to hire a Communications Coordinator with the hire date of January 1, 2017 with the understanding if they need to approach us beforehand we would entertain that later

**Maker:** Chanzit

**Second:** Cerone

Discussion was held on the motion. Wolff stated that if we have the hire date of January 1<sup>st</sup> it gives us time to put it into the budget.

**Roll Call Vote:** **Aye:** Chanzit, Wolff, Fischer, O'Brien, Mueller, Botterman, Cerone, McFadden, Russotto, Stark

**Nay:** Brown

10-1 Vote, 3 Absent, Motion carried.

## 6. Project Status

There was no project status.

## 7. Other

Newman reported that interviews for the Fire Marshall have been completed and the position should be filled in the next month or two.

Fischer asked about the Marathon Station. Newman stated that the City received a favorable response from the owner with the interest in learning how to utilize the property for additional temporary parking. There will be a meeting set up in the near future. Newman reported that the owner has engaged with an environmental company to remove the tanks from the property.

O'Brien stated that the condition of the sidewalk on Batavia Avenue needs to have something done about it by next week. This should not be delayed. Newman reported that Scott Haines has contacted a contractor to fix that portion of the sidewalk and Peggy Colby has identified funds to pay for it. O'Brien thanked staff for their timely response. Brown added that the sidewalk south of First Street in front of the liquor store is in even worse condition.

O'Brien stated that Woodland Hills Road was striped. A speed limit calculator was placed on the stop sign and they should put the calculator mid-block to get the best data collection.

Brown pointed out that there are piles of dirt and asphalt left at the gravel parking lot. We should expect the same out of us as we would expect from every other developer. This is in the heart of downtown and we shouldn't have piles left out and they need to be cleaned up.

Wolff would like to revisit the discussion to televise the COW meetings at a future COW meeting. McFadden seconded that request.

**8. Adjournment**

There being no other business to discuss, Brown asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:20pm; Made by O'Brien; Seconded by Mueller. Motion carried.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jennifer Austin-Smith