

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

St. Louis, Michigan
January 19, 2021

The regular meeting of the Saint Louis City Council was called to order by Mayor James Kelly on Tuesday, January 5, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom. Public participation was made available by Zoom or call-in.

Council Members Present: Via Zoom Mayor James C. Kelly, Roger L. Collison, George T. Kubin, William R. Leonard, Thomas L. Reed (all members participated from within the City of St. Louis).

Council Members Absent: None

City Manager: Kurt Giles
City Clerk: Mari Anne Ryder
Police Chief: Richard Ramereiz

Others that Participated:

Keith Risdon – Public Services Director, Mark Abbott – Public Works Superintendent, Bobbie Marr – Finance Director, Ken Berthiaume – Berthiaume & Company, Ralph Echinaw – St. Louis Sentinel

Audit Presentation.

Ken Barthiaume informed members of the 2019/2020 audit findings and reviewed the various accounts. An unmodified opinion was given, which is the best opinion given. The City is in a healthy financial condition. Members thanked Ken and Bobbie for their good work.

Moved by Kubin, supported by Reed, to receive the Audit ending June 30, 2020 and place on file.

Roll call vote:
Ayes: Kubin, Reed, Collison, Leonard, Kelly
Motion carried.

City Council Minutes.

Moved by Reed, supported by Leonard, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on January 5, 2021.

Roll call vote:
Ayes: Reed, Leonard, Collison, Kubin, Kelly
Nays: None
Motion carried.

Moved by Collison, supported by Leonard, to approve the minutes of the Goal Setting Meeting minutes held on January 13, 2021.

Roll call vote:
Ayes: Collison, Leonard, Kubin, Reed, Kelly
Nays: None
Motion carried.

Claims & Accounts.

City Council discussed the Claims & Accounts.

Moved by Kubin, supported by Reed, to approve the Claims & Accounts in the amount of \$390,725.10.

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Kubin, Reed, Collison, Leonard, Kelly

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Monthly Reports.

City Council discussed the December, 2020 Monthly Reports.

Moved by Collison, supported by Leonard, to receive the December, 2020 Monthly Reports and place on file.

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Collison, Leonard, Kubin, Reed, Kelly

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Audience Recognition.

Ralph Echtenaw asked about the recent flooding at City Hall. Manager Giles stated a pipe broke between 10 & 11 p.m. on January 6th, approximately 4,000 gallons of water was lost. Thankfully Officers Morell and Crowther saw the issue and acted quickly to shut the water off.

Consent Agenda.

Mayor Kelly requested approval/receipt of Consent Agenda items “a” through “c” as shown below:

- a. Payment to City of Alma for 2020 Household Hazardous Waste Program.
- b. Payment to OHM for Professional Services – Sanitary Sewer Improvements.
- c. Payment to Marloo Equipment for Energy Smart Program.

Moved by Reed, supported by Collison, to approve Consent Agenda items “a” through “c.”

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Reed, Collison, Kubin, Leonard, Kelly

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

New Business.

Resolution 2021-02 – Poverty Exemption.

Manager Giles requested members adopt Resolution 2021-02 to set the 2021 Poverty Guidelines, which is done annually.

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Member Collison, and supported by Member Leonard:

WHEREAS, the adoption of guidelines for poverty exemptions is required of the City Council; and

WHEREAS, the principal residence of persons, who the Assessor and Board of Review determines by reason of poverty to be unable to contribute to the public charge, is eligible for exemption in whole or in part from taxation under Public Act 390 of 1994 (MCL 211.7u); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to PA 390 of 1994, the City of St. Louis, Gratiot County adopts the following guidelines for the Board of Review to implement. The guidelines shall include but not be limited to the specific income and asset levels of the claimant and all persons residing in the household, including any property tax credit returns, filed in the current or immediately preceding year;

To be eligible, a person shall do all the following on an annual basis:

- 1) Be an owner of and occupy as a principal residence the property for which an exemption is requested.
- 2) File a claim with the assessor or Board of Review, accompanied by federal and state income tax returns for all persons residing in the principal residence, including any property tax credit returns filed in the immediately preceding year or in the current year or a signed State Tax Commission form 4988, *Poverty Exemption Affidavit*.
- 3) File a claim reporting that the combined assets of all persons do not exceed \$5,000. Assets include but are not limited to, real estate other than the principal residence, personal property, motor vehicles, recreational vehicles and equipment, certificates of deposit, savings accounts, checking accounts, stocks, bonds, life insurance, retirement funds, etc.
- 4) Produce a valid driver's license or other form of identification if requested.
- 5) Produce, if requested, a deed, land contract, or other evidence of ownership of the property for which an exemption is requested.
- 6) Meet the federal poverty income guidelines as defined and determined annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services or alternative guidelines adopted by the governing body providing the alternative guidelines do not provide eligibility requirements less than the federal guidelines.
- 7) The application for an exemption shall be filed after January 1, but one business day prior to the last day of the December Board of Review. The filing of this claim constitutes an appearance before the Board of Review for the purpose of preserving the right of appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal.
- 8) The applicant should appear before the board of review for purpose of answering any questions the board may have to make a proper determination.

The following are the 2021 federal poverty income guidelines which are updated annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The annual allowable income includes income for all persons residing in the principal residence.

Federal Poverty Guidelines Used in the Determination of Poverty Exemptions

Size of Family Unit	2021 Poverty Guidelines
1	\$12,760
2	\$17,240
3	\$21,720
4	\$26,200
5	\$30,680
6	\$35,160
7	\$39,640
8	\$44,120
For each additional person	\$4,480

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the assessor and Board of Review shall follow the above stated policy and federal guidelines in granting or denying an exemption, unless the Board of Review determines there are substantial and compelling reasons why there should be a deviation from the policy and federal guidelines and these reasons are communicated in writing to the claimant.

Ayes: Collison, Leonard, Kubin, Reed, Kelly

Nays: None

Resolution Declared Adopted.

Resolution 2021-03 Asset Standards.

Manager Giles requested members adopt Resolution 2021-03, is also done annually to set the Maximum Asset Standards to be eligible for a Poverty

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Member Reed, and supported by Member Kubin:

WHEREAS, the adoption of the Maximum Asset Standards is required of the City Council; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to PA 390 of 1994 the City of St. Louis, Gratiot County states that the poverty exemption guidelines established by the governing body of the local assessing unit shall include an asset level test; and

WHEREAS, the City of St. Louis adopts the following Maximum Asset Standards for a household to be eligible for a **POVERTY EXEMPTION**. The below asset levels **DO NOT** include the value of your homestead. (Per Tribunal ruling 08-13-97, Docket #236230, and the equity of the homestead should not be included within the asset test to be valid).

Combined assets to the total household may not exceed \$5,000.00

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Assessor and Board of Review shall follow the above stated Maximum Asset Standards in granting or denying an exemption and that if your household assets exceed the above stated Maximum Asset Standards you are NOT eligible for a **POVERTY EXEMPTION**.

Ayes: Reed, Kubin, Collison, Leonard, Kelly

Nays: None

Resolution Declared Adopted.

Resolution 2021-04 – Allow Local Residents to Protest in Writing.

Manager Giles requested member adopt Resolution 2021-04 to allow local residents to protest in writing.

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Member Collison, and supported by Member Leonard:

WHEREAS, in order to ease the burden on taxpayers, the assessor and the board of review and to ensure that all taxpayers have an equal opportunity to be heard by the board of review, City of St. Louis hereby resolves, according to provisions of MCL 211.30 (7) of the General Property Tax Act, that the Board of Review shall receive letters of protest regarding assessments from resident taxpayers from the first Tuesday in March until it adjourns from the public hearings for which it meets to hear such protests.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, all notices of assessment change and all advertisements of board of review meetings are to include a statement that the resident taxpayers may protest by letter to the board.

Ayes: Collison, Leonard, Kubin, Reed, Kelly

Nays: None

Resolution Declared Adopted

Purchase of Equipment and Supplies for Wastewater Treatment Plant Lab.

City Manager Giles requested members approve the purchase of equipment and supplies for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Lab from USA Blue Book in the amount of \$7,245.27.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Reed, supported by Collison, to approve the purchase of equipment and supplies for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Lab from USA Blue Book in the amount of \$7,245.27.

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Reed, Collison, Kubin, Leonard, Kelly

Nays: None

Motion carried.

MERS Plan Addendums.

Manager Giles requested members approve to adopt the MERS Plan Addendums. It is believed there are no changes to the plans. MERS is consolidating the plans.

Discussion was held.

Member Collison requested the Addendums be made available to the bargaining units.

Moved by Collison, supported by Leonard, to approve to adopt the MERS Plan Addendums and advising the bargaining units of the Addendums.

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Collison, Leonard, Kubin, Reed, Kelly

Nays: None

Motion carried.

City Manager Report.

Manager Giles commended Officers Morell and Crowther for finding the water leak, notifying staff and videoing the water damage. Also, Mark Abbott and DPW staff for cleanup efforts and Bobbie Marr for working with insurance adjusters.

Manager Giles informed members that Wastewater Treatment operators have not had to purchase Ferric Chloride which usually costs over \$5,000.00. They do have it on hand in case it is needed but are currently meeting discharge limits without it.

Also, the St. Louis, Ithaca, Pine River Township Transit Authority is discussing entering into an Operation Agreement with the City of Alma. More to come.

City Clerk Report.

Nothing to report.

Police Chief Report.

Nothing to report.

Council Comments.

Member Leonard asked if people can cut through parking lots to avoid traffic lights. Stating he notices it a lot at McDonalds. Chief Ramereiz stated it is against the law. There is quite a problem with it at Subway and the car wash parking lots and is being addressed. He was un-aware that it was happening at McDonalds.

Member Collison stated he noticed bargaining unit contracts will expire in July and was unsure of the process. Manager

stated the Water/Wastewater/ DPW contract and the Electric contract will expire in July. Typically, a letter is received from the units.

Member Collison asked if Council Members attend the negotiation. Manager Giles stated no but are welcome to.

Member Collison stated he would like to attend. Members stated they thought it would be great if Roger attended.

Public Comments.

Ralph asked if any of the parts of the City Hall building are off limits due to the recent flooding.

Manager Giles stated no, carpet will be replaced in one room, others will be shampooed, baseboards are replaced.

Adjournment.

Moved by Collison, supported by Leonard, to adjourn at 7:04 p.m.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Collison, Leonard, Kubin, Reed, Kelly

Nays: None

Motion carried.

Mari Anne Ryder, City Clerk