

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

of the

CITY OF DARIEN

AUGUST 1, 2011

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Mayor Weaver.

2. Present: Halil Avci John F. Poteraske, Jr.
 Tina M. Beilke Ted V. Schauer
 Joseph A. Marchese Joerg Seifert

Absent: Sylvia McIvor (arrived at 6:10 P.M.)

Also in Attendance: Kathleen Moesle Weaver, Mayor
JoAnne E. Ragona, City Clerk
Michael J. Coren, City Treasurer
Bryon D. Vana, City Administrator
Daniel Gombac, Director of Community Development/Municipal Services

DECLARATION OF A QUORUM — There being six aldermen present, Mayor Weaver declared a quorum.

3. **DITCH PROJECTS –FYE 4-30-12 BUDGET OPTIONS**

Administrator Vana advised that the draft FYE 04-30-11 audit will be presented to the Administrative/Finance Committee on August 8, 2011. He stated the General Fund balance exceeded the estimate by \$1,037,923. During the budget process, the ditch projects were deferred until the sale of City owned properties. It is anticipated the Great Dane closing will take place in thirty to sixty days. Since the General Fund balance is higher than projected, the City Council could proceed with the three identified, unfunded ditch projects this season. These projects were recommended since the adjacent roads are scheduled for repaving next year. Administrator Vana distributed and reviewed a handout which shows a line by line review of estimated and audited General Fund expenditures and revenues. He noted that the handout shows higher revenues and lower expenditures than anticipated. Next year the estimates should be on target.

Alderman Poteraske invited all to attend the Administrative/Finance Committee Meeting on August 8, 2011 which is open to the public.

Administrator Vana recommended that some of the surplus fund balance be placed into the Capital Projects Fund to insure available funds for next year's capital projects whether the ditch projects are approved or not.

Treasurer Coren explained the differences between fund balances and cash, and confirmed that there is cash available for the ditch work.

Alderman McIvor arrived at 6:10 P.M.

Administrator Vana reminded the Council that ditch projects are performed the year before scheduled road work.

Alderman Poteraske spoke of ditch history. He does not want the Council to be locked into an annual expense of \$600,000 in order to get the ditch projects completed by 2023.

Administrator Vana explained that the Council reviews and approves a three-year budget plan.

Mayor Weaver added that it is determined what the City can afford during the annual budget review.

Alderman Poteraske stated the project cost cannot exceed what the City can afford. The ditch projects were discussed during the budget process and deferred.

Administrator Vana advised that the ditch projects are being brought forward at this time because of the additional fund balance and the time of year.

Alderman Marchese noted that the \$600,000 per year was an estimate. Some years will cost more and some will cost less. Once the ditches are rated, the schedule of repairs may change. He added that a plan and projection must be in place but if the funds are not available, the project will not get done. He suggested it might be advisable to separate the ditch and road programs.

Alderman Schauer feels that if ditch repairs are made properly, they will last for many years and ultimately increase the home values.

Alderman Poteraske had no objection to planning but would like the process to slow down.

Alderman Avci commented that the City is in the process of developing criteria for the ditch program. He felt that all necessary infrastructure improvements should be reviewed, prioritized and decisions made during the budget process.

Mayor Weaver noted that many residents prefer the rural theme. Administrator Vana added that if area residents petition to convert from rural to urban a Special Service Area is established so those who benefit from the improvements pay for them. Director Gombac noted that an approved plan does not guarantee approval of a project.

Administrator Vana noted that this situation is unique because of the difference in accruals. He added that, generally, estimates are very close. It is important the Counsel members review the handout and the three year projection.

Alderman Beilke advised that she has no problem with the projection which acts as a guideline. She stated that the identified ditches and roads are in very bad shape and should be a high priority.

Treasurer Coren mentioned that just because there are extra funds in the General Fund, it does not mean they must be spent. The City Council has the option to spend or save.

Alderman Beilke noted that the money from the sale of properties has not been realized. The extra fund balance is in addition to those anticipated funds.

Administrator Vana advised that the handout does not include revenues from the sale of property.

Alderman Marchese prefers the ditches not be attached to road projects. He stated that the criteria/rating system will dictate when there is a need to do the ditch projects.

Alderman Avci feels the ditch projects are important to residents who border ditches. He feels the programs need to be prioritized. He added there are other projects which will impact more residents. Alderman Avci recommends the money be saved, and infrastructure be reviewed as part of the budget process. The Counsel should spend money on projects with the highest priority.

Alderman McIvor inquired which of the three identified ditch projects requires the most attention.

Director Gombac responded that although they all need to be repaired, High Road from 67th Street to Janet at a cost of \$420,000 would rank first. The other projects are Poplar Lane at a cost of \$128,000, and Bentley Avenue from 71st Street to 72nd Street at a cost of \$37,450. He added that the projections to the 2024 target date are based on funding over the last several years, and are in conjunction with the road program. Since the ditch repairs must be performed prior to the road work, delay of repairs will affect the road program schedule. Roads and ditches cannot be decoupled at this time. They can be separated in the future once criteria is established.

Administrator Vana advised that the roads are criteria rated, and provided a detailed explanation on the importance of maintaining the road repair schedule in order to avoid higher costs due to the increase in deterioration.

Alderman Poteraske prefers the ditch repair expense be deferred, and reviewed during the budget season. He believes all capital improvement projects should be reviewed and rated. Alderman Poteraske spoke in opposition to unfunded, non-emergency projects being approved mid-year.

In response to Alderman Schauer, Director Gombac advised that Sunrise is the worst ditch in the City. Alderman Schauer reiterated the need to take care of these ditch projects.

Alderman Beilke added that the crumbling road on High poses a safety hazard. Since it is a main road to Hinsdale South High School, it is highly used by pedestrians, buses and vehicles.

Mayor Weaver called for an informal vote on whether to proceed or defer the ditch projects.

Administrator Vana added that a budget amendment requires five affirmative votes.

The poll results were as follows:

To defer: Avci, McIvor, Poteraske

To proceed: Beilke, Marchese, Schauer, Seifert

Result: The ditch projects will be deferred.

Gary Roth of 105 Elm Street spoke of the history of ditch projects. Alderman Beilke and Director Gombac visited his neighborhood and witnessed the problems. Mr. Roth feels this area has been neglected compared to other areas in town. He commended Mayor Weaver for the many improvements in town. He added that there are many homes in his area impacted by the crumbling ditches.

Alderman McIvor explained that she voted to defer since the program was not in this year's budget. She would like to see the City take a more strategic approach.

Alderman Avci stated that he appreciates Mr. Roth's comments and although he agrees the ditches are in need of repair, he is uncertain of an immediate need.

Administrator Vana inquired if there was an interest in transferring the additional funds to the Capital Projects Fund for next year. All agreed.

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

It was moved by Alderman Poteraske and seconded by Alderman Seifert to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 P.M.

VOICE VOTE
MOTION CARRIED

Mayor

City Clerk

JER/ld