

Mayor Viering called a meeting of the Sterling City Council to order, following the City Employees Service Awards Program. The meeting began at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, September 17, 2007. Roll Call. Present: Aldermen Adell, Cox, Elston, Lee, and Sotelo. Absent: Alderman Martin.

Also present were City Manager Jay Wieland, Assistant City Manager Scott Shumard, Finance Director Cindy Von Holten, Fire Chief Arlyn Oetting, Police Chief Ron Potthoff, Director of Community Services Vern Gottel and City Clerk Marie Rombouts.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Chief Potthoff introduced Theresa Moser and Jamie Preston. Moser and Preston explained who they were and why they came before the Council. Moser is the mother of Nathaniel Galvin. Galvin was the driver of a car whose passenger shot and killed Ryan Thomas last year in a gang related drive by shooting. Preston is the mother of Ryan Thomas. Moser and Preston asked the Council to work on the community's awareness of gang activities. Both mothers expressed their concern that nothing can change what happened to their sons but would like to see that future incidents can be avoided by better gang awareness and education.

Alderman Cox made a motion to approve the items on the Consent Agenda, as follows:

- 1) a) City Council Minutes of September 4, 2007
b) Council Study Session Minutes of September 10, 2007
- 2) Bills and Payroll totaling \$408,922.72
- 3) Petition to allow Newman High School to hold their annual Homecoming Parade on Friday, September 28 at 2:00 p.m.
- 4) Petition to allow the Community Christmas for Children Committee to hold a bucket brigade fundraiser on Saturday, October 20 at the intersection of Second Street/Second Avenue, Third Street/First Avenue and Fourth Street/Second Avenue from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
- 5) Petition from YMCA to hold a Family Fun Walk on Sunday, September 23 at 5:00 p.m. on YMCA Way and West 29th Street to promote the health benefits of walking
- 6) Refer petition from Daniel Moreno as owner and Daria Valdivia as contract purchaser to rezone certain real property located at 1104 West Third Street and 1101 West Fourth Street to the Plan Commission

The motion was seconded by Alderman Lee. Voting: Ayes – All. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Alderman Lee made a motion to approve the Proclamation declaring September 26, 2007 as Stock Our Local Food Pantries Day; seconded by Alderman Sotelo. Mayor Viering read the Proclamation into the record and presented the proclamation to two Newman High School students. Voting: Ayes – All. Nayses – None. Motion carried.

Jen Slaney, Director of the Sterling Public Library, presented the Council with the book, "My Antonia". This book was selected for this year's Big Read project. The Sterling Public Library is working in collaboration with the Rock Falls and Dixon Public Libraries, Dixon, Sterling and Newman High Schools, Sauk Valley Community College, and Woodlawn Arts Academy. The kick-off for the Big Read will be at Sauk Valley Community College on Sunday, September 23, 2007. Mayor Viering thanked Slaney for the time she has spent on this important project.

Alderman Adell made a motion to approve Municipal Ordinance #2007-09-23 and authorize the Mayor to sign the Local Agency Agreement for Jurisdictional Transfer; seconded by Alderman Elston. Voting: Ayes – All. Nayses – None. Motion carried.

Alderman Lee made a motion to place on the floor for discussion the filing by Illinois American Water Company (IAWC) for a water rate increase with the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC); seconded by Alderman Cox. Voting: Ayes – All. Nayses – None. Motion carried.

Alderman Cox stated that he had received several phone calls in opposition to the water rate increase. Five years ago, IAWC received a 47% increase, primarily for security of facilities. Shortly thereafter, security cameras were installed and eliminated manpower for security. Alderman Cox stated that businesses cannot increase their costs by 31% and expect to stay in business. Alderman Cox urged Council members to send a letter of opposition to the ICC.

Alderman Adell stated that during his employment with the bank, he had a case heard before the ICC. Based on this experience, Alderman Adell believes that the ICC will review the request fairly. The ICC is well trained and will act accordingly.

Alderman Cox stated that two other communities, Pekin and Streator, are sending letters protesting the rate increase.

Alderman Lee believes the rate increases are steep. The increases exceed the cost of living increases.

Kevin Whitehouse, local manager, of IAWC explained that these increases are to offset capital expenditures, such as radium treatment, service extension to the Wal-Mart Distribution Center, Second Avenue main repairs and east end pressure improvements. IAWC has asked for 31% increase but the ICC has the final say.

Alderman Cox asked if increases are set for all communities. Whitehouse explained that increases are based on each community.

Alderman Sotelo asked if cost-cutting measures have been used.

Whitehouse explained that labor is at a bare minimum. Increased costs for electricity and chemicals, with transportation, raise IAWC's costs. IAWC runs as efficiently as possible to provide high quality water.

Alderman Cox made a motion to send a letter of objection to the ICC regarding the rate increase by IAWC on behalf of the City; seconded by Alderman Lee. Alderman Adell felt that we need a professional opinion based on why we do not want to see an increase. Alderman Cox feels that we don't need a professional opinion, it is our duty to represent our people in opposing this increase. Alderman Sotelo would like more information before a letter is sent. Voting: Ayes – Aldermen Cox, Elston and Lee. Nays – Alderman Adell and Sotelo. Motion carried to draft a letter of objection to the rate increase and have it reviewed by the Council before sending.

Manager Wieland asked if City staff should prepare the letter. Wieland believes it will be difficult to prepare a letter without facts and public research. Alderman Cox would like City staff to prepare the letter for the Council's review. Manager Wieland admitted to being hard on IAWC. He was surprised that the 47% increase was approved five years ago. The radium treatment was a federal mandate and Wieland understands that IAWC is concerned about their customers and the quality of the water. Manager Wieland realized that increased cost of electricity has been difficult because IAWC receives no cost breaks and IAWC cannot capitalize these costs annually. Their requests must be presented before the ICC.

Manager Wieland stated that the Employee Appreciation and Service Awards Reception went well, preceding the meeting. He expressed appreciation to the City employees in attendance, especially the department heads with 30 to 40 years of experience.

Manager Wieland stated that he had left recruitment profiles for each Alderman to complete and return by next Monday.

Alderman Elston thanked Chief Oetting for the ride on the fire truck during the Latin American Fiesta Parade.

Alderman Cox stated that Eighth Avenue is coming along well. Manager Wieland can see the end in sight.

Alderman Lee thanked Mayor Viering for her comments during the Employees Appreciation Reception.

Alderman Sotelo appreciates the staff's recommendations and insight on projects. It makes his job easier. The longevity of employees speaks well of the City.

With no further business to discuss, Alderman Lee made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Alderman Elston. Voting: Ayes – All. Nays – None. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Marie Rombouts
City Clerk