

Alma, Michigan
April 25, 2017

Present: Ayers, Allman, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

Absent: None.

Work session of Alma City Commission began at 5:30 p.m.

City Manager Phillip Moore gave the Commissioners a report on today's early morning fire at 117 & 119 W Superior. 117 W Superior is a total loss. 119 W Superior has water and smoke damage due to the roof fire but it can be saved. Interim Public Safety Director Williams reported on the cooperation of our neighboring Communities in fighting the fire. The Alma Fire Department appreciated their help.

The Highland Festival Committee is reviving the tradition of Casual Kilt Friday. Everyone is being encouraged to wear their kilts on Fridays during the month of May.

A copy of a draft ordinance which would allow billing people that use the fire department services was presented. The ordinance would apply only to fire calls within the City of Alma. The actual charges will be adopted by resolution. The funds from the charges would be part of the City's General Fund. The charges would help offset the City's share of the Rural Urban Fire Budget.

Commissioner Harrington is concerned that citizens cannot afford these costs and will not call the Fire Department when needed. Commissioner Allman stated that home owners Insurance policies contain coverage for fire run costs. City Attorney, Costanzo stated he wrote the Ordinance broadly for Commissioners to review and make suggested additions or deletions. Commissioner Piccolo asked if further information could be gathered to help the drafting of an ordinance. City Manager Moore will get back with Commissioners on this research.

The Gratiot Area Water Authority has reviewed the depreciation policy for the Authority. GAWA has decided to stay with its current policy of funding depreciation. The assets owned by GAWA will have an annual depreciation amount of ~\$635,000. Our budget was prepared before we had all the information needed to make the calculation. The budget as presented assumed an annual depreciation amount of \$508,000. The depreciation in the water fund will need to be adjusted. Based on the changes, he believes the commodity charges will be increasing while the readiness to serve charges will be decreasing.

MDOT conducted a customer survey of bus services. MDOT hired Michigan State University to conduct the surveys. Our participation was voluntary. The survey was conducted in January 2017. The survey team rode our buses for several days to ask the questions. The timing used by the survey crew left out the school runs. The results are very positive. The riders believed that the arrival time was good, the buses were clean and comfortable, the drivers were helpful and provided good information, they feel safe on the bus, and overall were very satisfied with the service.

As we said during the budget work session, the experiment of providing Saturday bus service has not seen much ridership. We have only a handful of customers using the Saturday service. Based on the usage, it is hard to justify keeping the service going. We will be shutting down the Saturday service this spring.

It was found that a flyer is being circulated in Alma. The flyer does not name the group circulating the flyer or sponsoring the event. The group is opposed to the City of Alma becoming a Welcoming City. He has answered several calls related to the issue. His position has been consistent. He is not opposed to the City becoming a Welcoming City, provided that staff time and no city money is involved. He has done nothing about the issue since the Commission last discussed the issue. From his perspective, this is a political issue which means the Commission gets to decide.

The calls he has received have expressed concerns about a potential mosque being allowed to open in Alma. Under the U.S. Constitution and the Federal 2000 Religious Land Use and Institutional Persons Act, any religious group has a right to have a house of worship in any zoning district. Alma ordinances would not prohibit a mosque from locating in the City. They would not need our permission if they purchase an existing church. This seems to upset the callers.

We received a letter from Ken and Bette LeBlanc advising the City Commission that they do not want the City of Alma to become a Welcoming City. They are concerned that becoming one would be detrimental to our safety and lifestyle.

**Alma, Michigan
April 25, 2017**

Mayor Mapes called a regular meeting of the Alma City Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Alma Municipal Building.

Present: Ayers, Allman, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

Absent: None.

Mayor Mapes asked the City Commission and members of the audience to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Motion by Commissioner Piccolo as supported by Vice-Mayor Nyman to approve the minutes of the April 11, 2017 regular meeting.

Yes: Ayers, Allman, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Vice-Mayor Nyman to approve the request for purchase in the amount of \$4,480.00 to Country Rocks for hardwood landscape mulch and playground fiber.

Yes: Ayers, Allman, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Harrington as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to approve the request for purchase in the amount of \$2,018.88 to Fisher Scientific Company for a new Phosphorus Analyzer for the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Yes: Allman, Allman, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Harrington as supported by Commissioner Mott to adopt a resolution approving a grant application to the Secretary of State to purchase 3 new voting systems from Dominion Voting which includes years 1 through 5 annual maintenance. Years 6 through 10 will be the local municipalities cost for annual maintenance and to authorize City Clerk, Letourneau to submit the grant application.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo

No: None.

Motion by Vice-Mayor Nyman as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to direct the City Manager to make an investigation and report to the City Commission on the construction of sanitary sewer leads on Ely Street from S State St. to Moyer Ave. and Euclid Avenue from E. Superior St. to the railroad tracks.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Piccolo as supported by Commissioner Allman to approve a resolution to sell stored unused City vehicles through an online auction.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Commissioner Allman to adopt a resolution approving the request from the "Health and Safety Day" planning committee to close State Street from Superior Street to Center Street, Wednesday, June 21st from 2 pm to 8 pm.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Vice-Mayor Nyman to adopt a resolution authorizing the execution of a Revised Section 5311 Operating Assistance Contract with the Michigan Department of Transportation (2017-0004 P1/R1) to increase operating assistance funds for year 2017 and to authorize Mayor Mapes and City Clerk Letourneau to execute the agreement on behalf of the City of Alma.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Allman as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to adopt a resolution approving a one year listing agreement extension for the selling of lots at Gemstone Field with Century-21 Lee-Mac Realty, ending April 14, 2018.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Vice-Mayor Nyman as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to receive the following reports and place them on file: March 2017 Investment report, Alma Transportation Center March report and the Planning Commission minutes of April 3, 2017.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Harrington as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to approve appointment of Laura Finn to the Alma Public Library Board for a five-year term ending June 1, 2022.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Vice-Mayor Nyman to approve the appointment of Brian Kulling, Ellen Richter and Denise McCracken to the Alma Planning Commission for a three-year term ending May 1, 2020.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to approve the appointment of Tadd Godfrey and Rodys Dancer to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a three-year term ending May 1, 2020.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Allman as supported by Commissioner Ayers to approve the appointment of Dale Greer as an alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals for an unexpiring term.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Motion by Commissioner Piccolo as supported by Commissioner Allman to approve Warrant No. 17-20 and to authorize the City Treasurer to issue checks for payment of all claims.

Yes: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Mayor Mapes asked for Commissioners comments.

Commissioner Ayers expressed his thanks for all who helped with the downtown fire.

Commissioner Allman informed all that the Highland festivities are beginning this weekend with the crowning of the Queen of Scots.

City Attorney Costanzo stated that we sometimes take things for granted. He hopes that all will recognize how great the Alma Police and Fire Departments were in fighting the fire.

City Manager Moore wanted to also express his thanks for the people behind the scene of the fire fighting. Aerick Ripley, Ron Turner, the Public Works, Water and Wastewater Departments, Consumers Energy, the Red Cross and the Community should all be thanked for their hard work.

Mayor Mapes opened the floor for Public comments.

Mark Bartholomew, 1002 W Superior, spoke that he has concerns with the possible cuts to the Public Safety Department. We need to preserve what we have. The people of Alma seem to be losing more and more services. How small can the Police Department get, can't cuts be made somewhere else.

Laurie Wilson of 7996 Alger wanted to thank the Police and Fire Departments for putting out the fire. She is worried that if people get laid off we won't have safety. It is a big mistake to layoff officers.

Jeff Hederick, President of the Police Officer Union wanted the Commission to help him and the union understand the recent police layoffs. Why did this happen so fast? During recent negotiations with the union no mention was made that there was a problem with wages or labor. There was no mention of possible layoffs. The department has lost two good street cops. The department also lost the canine unit. Why is everything happening so fast. He would like someone to meet with the Police Officers Union to understand the urgency.

Casey Mueller of the Alma Police Department spoke that yesterday we lost two officers. He would like answers as to why the department had to trim back now. It was understood that the layoffs might come in Budget Year 2018.

Kim Powell of the Alma Police Department addressed the Commissioners as the School Liaison Officer. Her position is now being cut back to patrol the roads to cover those two officers. You are doing a disservice to the school children and the Community. The Magnet officer is a real need. You should be trimming the fat not officers.

Christopher Drury of the Alma Police Department addressed the Commissioners that moral is important to keep us moving forward. Moral is hurt by these cuts. This Police Department is where people want to come work for but now he is questioning this. These two officers came from other Communities and worked well for the Department. Now they may have to move. These layoffs will have longstanding consequences with more people leaving Alma.

Travis Polish, 321 Allen, and as a former Commissioner wanted to know why were these officers laid off? Why is this all of a sudden? Why did we hire these people just to lay them off after one year? Why did no one see this coming. The Commissioners should know. It is their responsibility to have the answers and it is disgraceful that they cannot answer these questions. You need to tell us why.

Tyler Gifford of the Alma Police Department, who was laid off, spoke that he loved his job. While in his internship, after the Police Academy, he thought he would work here for the rest of his career. When he hired in there was no mention of possible layoffs. He planned on being a loyal employee. He needs answers.

Mark Smoker, 720 S. Campus Dr. Mt. Pleasant, heard of the possible layoffs last Thursday. He came to this meeting to discuss the possibility and was surprised to find out that the layoffs had occurred. He felt that losing officers means that backups will have to come from other Communities but backups need to be here not from another town.

Richard Ramereiz, Police Chief from St. Louis stated that these layoffs and the loss of the Magnet officer will be a real safety concern for the working officers. Yes, we can backup officers but we may be in our own situations and cannot respond in a timely manner. This shortfall of two officers will create problems covering crime. Crime especially violent crime is on the increase. Magnet is an invaluable resource. St. Louis and the County don't have the manpower to be always available.

Les Rosan, 889 Mill, and as a retired police officer spoke that it is a shameful that the Commissioners were not knowing of these layoffs. The Commissioners do not understand the family environment that exists in the Police Department. He has concerns with backups for officers. There should be City wide meetings on ways to trim the budget. You have poked a sleeping bear, consider undoing this personnel decision.

Michael Mitchell, Pine River Township, said that it was not right releasing officers. He doesn't think we should let them go. He wanted to thank the officers and is sad to see them go.

Jake Gulick Sergeant of the Alma Police Department addressed the Commissioners he wanted to backup up what has already been said. He feels that this was totally done wrong.

Tyler Kinsey of the Alma Police Department spoke to the Commissioners that this action was told to them because of budget restraints, but this fiscal year is not over yet. So why now did the layoffs occur?

City Attorney Costanzo stated that tonight is not the night to get answers. Certain procedures need to be followed before opening up to the public on personnel matters.

Mayor Mapes stated that they will look into this matter.

Mark Bartholomew wants the Commissioners to look into this and get back with the citizens with answers.

Tyler Gifford spoke again that there are no labor issues or reprimands in his records. He wants answers.

Lt. Kendra Overla of the Alma Police Department stated that the officers are in a state of confusion as to why

these layoffs occurred now. She was told that the officers had to be let go because of budget restraints but why when the present budget does not end until June 30th. The Department hoped that they would have time to come up with ideas to trim the budget without layoffs. We are a family and losing these officers is like losing a member of your family.

There being no further Public comment, Mayor Mapes asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Commissioner Allman as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Yes: Ayers, Allman, Harrington, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

No: None.

Gregory S. Mapes, Mayor

Sheila Letourneau, City Clerk