

**Alma, Michigan**  
**July 11, 2017**

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

**Absent:** Harrington.

**Work Session began at 5:30 p.m.**

City Manager Moore informed the Commissioners:

The Michigan Municipal League will be holding their Annual Conference in Holland, MI from September 13-15, 2017. The MML Conference is a great venue learning about municipal government and networking with other municipal leaders from around the State of Michigan. The MML website has more information about the conference. If City Commissioners are interested in attending the conference, please contact Sheila Letourneau so she can register you and make hotel reservations if needed.

The Maples Building is nearing close out. We are currently waiting for the State to finish their review of everything. We have reached the point where the MEDC is willing to consider new applications from the City of Alma for rental rehabilitation projects. Under the grant program, the only city match is staff time to administer the grant. The property owner must have prepared drawings with an architect or engineers seal and the financing for the owner's share of the project. Under MEDC rules, we must use a certified grant administrator to assist us in the grant administration process which is covered by the grant.

Aeric Ripley is organizing a meeting of downtown property owners to determine the level of interest in pursuing another grant. The final products of the rehabilitation projects have been remarkable. The apartments have been very nice. The program makes it easier for the businesses to be successful in the downtown.

Mr. Moore has enclosed a first draft of a site restoration ordinance. This ordinance would apply to all zoning districts and all types of structures. Unfortunately, we have had experience with demolition problems. We have been operating under the International Property Maintenance Code which addresses the problem but in a more general, vague sense. In dealing with property owners and insurance companies having a clearly defined ordinance related to building demolition and site restoration is essential. The details and fine points are often argued. Having a proper demolition and restoration is important to the community and the neighborhood.

The proposed ordinance requires that demolitions perform all state required testing. All debris must be removed from the site. Foundations must be removed unless the Director of Public Works approves keeping in place. The site must be backfilled with sand with a top layer of top soil. The site must be seeded to grow grass as a top cover. This final step is important for aesthetics and soil erosion control.

In looking to the future, there is nothing being discussed in Lansing that would indicate that the FY2019 budget will be any easy to balance then the recent years' budgets. Our best forecast for the FY2019 General Fund revenues indicates that we should expect revenues similar to the current levels. That being the case, Mr. Moore is recommending that the City Commission meet in September to discuss our options for preparing the FY2019 budget. We will be faced with an option of raising revenue, cutting expenditures or using fund balance to balance the budget. If the raising revenue is to be considered, the September meeting would provide the City with enough time to hold public meetings or possibly elections in January/February, so that we will know the General Fund revenue picture and agree on the general direction for balancing the FY2019 budget early in the budget process.

The City of Alma has been officially recognized by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation as having been accepted into the Redevelopment Ready Community program. Mr. Moore signed a memo of understanding with the MEDC committing the City to work towards getting the RRC certified. Under the agreement, we have 365 days to reach the end. I think we can do that if we work at it. One of the items of the agreement is that we must provide the City Commission with a monthly update of our progress. For this month, he attached the City's

checklist to the newsletter. In the future, he will include the progress report as a monthly report to the City Commission.

The water transmission main project is making progress but still behind schedule. The first layer of asphalt has been paved on the section from Lincoln to Philadelphia. Most of the concrete work has been completed in that section but not all of it. The second phase from Philadelphia to Superior the transmission main has been installed up to Superior Street. The contractor is planning to bore under Superior Street. This will keep the street open while installing the pipeline across Superior.

The contractor has started a second crew on the project. They started on Van Buren and are currently headed north on Ennis Road. Having the second crew is important for the project meeting the construction deadline. We want the entire project completed, paved, and operational by the end of October. This is a big project. There are many opportunities for the construction to be delayed or slowed down. It is difficult to catch up. The second crew will help keep the project on track.

On the agenda is the parking lot for the farmers' market area. The lot is being paid through two sources. First, Beacon and Bridge is paying for a third of the cost. Their share relates to making the asphalt thicker to handle the weight of their trucks. The balance will be borne by the Gratiot County Community Foundation Parks Herbert Lueth Endowment Fund.

From staff perspective, this improvement will enhance the parking for the farmers' market customers. It will also reduce the maintenance time we spend on the lot. The current gravel lot requires frequent attentions because it is prone to developing big puddles. The pave surface will require less maintenance time.

Mr. Moore then presented a review on the MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Community Training Best Practices #5 to the Commission. In this training, Redevelopment Ready sites were explored. The traditional way for redevelopment was for a Community to wait for a developer to propose a project and then Community input occurs after a proposal is received. Redevelopment Ready Communities market opportunities to developers. Communities seek input to identify sites and establish a vision. The Community identifies and prioritized the redevelopment sites. Once these sites are established, a community maintains an updated list of priority sites to be redeveloped. Basic information is gathered for the sites such as photos, desired development, owner information, Community contact information, Zoning and Utilities. A vision needs to be developed which should include desired development outcomes and specific development criteria. Public input needs to be part of the plan. Need to identify community champions such as Greater Gratiot Development for industry and people like DDA director, Aeric Ripley for downtown developments. Town hall meetings are also important in obtaining input to develop sites. A united front among city officials, the public, institutions and community organizations is needed. This sends a welcoming message to developers. The Redevelopment Ready Community also identifies negotiable development tools, financial incentives and/or in-kind support. Incentives could be tax credits, land control, grants, technical support and adequate infrastructure. Property Information Packets (PIPs) need to be assembled. Once completed, these PIPs should be made available to developers by using marketing brochures and placing the PIP on web sites both local and statewide. Marketing sites brings on a competitive advantage, attracts investment in the community, promotes the overall community and promotes reuse of underutilized properties.

Mayor Mapes wanted the Commissioners to know that United Way is offering a Leadership Conference. He encourages all to attend.

Mr. Moore also found that on a bike trail network web site, the City of Alma was listed as being number two out of twenty other community bike trail networks nationwide. He encouraged the Commissioners to view the web site.

**Alma, Michigan**

**July 11, 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:** Allman, Ayers, Mapes, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

**Absent:** Harrington.

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 Ayers as supported by Commissioner Allman to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2017 regular meeting.

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

**No:** None.

Motion by Commissioner Piccolo as supported by Commissioner Allman to set a Public Hearing for Tuesday, August 8, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. to consider a request from Avalon & Tahoe Manufacturing, Inc. for a PA 198 Industrial Facilities Tax Exemption Certificate.

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

**No:** None.

Motion by Commissioner Allman as supported by Commissioner Mott to approve the request for payment in the amount of \$1,610.00 to Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr and Huber for support services through June 16, 2017 for the Water Ordinance revisions.

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

**No:** None.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to approve the request for purchase in the amount of \$5,245.74 to Standard Electric Company for the purchase of a new light pole and light fixture damaged in an auto accident at the corner of W. Superior and Philadelphia.

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

**No:** None.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Commissioner Allman to approve the request for purchase in the amount of \$4,104.00 to Scotland Oil Co. for gasoline and diesel fuel supplies.

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

**No:** None.

Motion by Commissioner Mott as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to receive the bids for the Scotland Yard Parking Lot Project and to award the bid to Robbin Harsh Excavating, Clare in the amount of \$60,969.25. Funds from the Herbert Lueth park endowment fund through the Gratiot Community Foundation will offset the City costs for the construction along with funds from RARE Holdings, LLC as per the authorized cost agreement. Mayor Mapes had objections for using the endowment funds for a little used park parking lot.

**Yes:** Allman, Ayers, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

**No:** Mapes.

The Rebuilding the Dream Park Committee of Andi Whitmore of 7199 N Luce, Kristie Hancock, 435 N Luce, Stephanie Little of 229 Fleming, Amanda Huff of 570 Charles, Jeff Somerville of 7765 N Luce and Sarah DeJong of 4580 W Jackson spoke to the Commission of their wish to rebuild the play structure at Wright Park. The current castle structure is past its prime, too difficult to maintain and not accessible to all individuals. The Committee would like to request the City to establish a fund to collect donations to get a new play structure. They believe that the amount needed will be in the range of \$170,000 to accomplish the goal. They are hoping that ground can be broken next Spring.

Commissioner Mott wanted to thank the Committee for a refreshing idea. Commissioner Allman asked if this project would be like the castle play structure project with community helpers building the new structure. He was told that they are hoping for community help. City Attorney Costanzo felt the age of the castle structure and those many years of constant use is why the structure is hard to maintain. Mayor Mapes feels that the Committee will achieve their objective and wishes them good luck.

Motion by Commissioner Mott as supported by Commissioner Ayers to adopt a resolution approving the request from the Rebuilding the Dream Park Committee, to create the Rebuilding the Dream Park Fund and to receive donations for the Rebuilding the Dream Park Project at Wright Park.

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

**No:** None.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Vice-Mayor Nyman to approve a resolution adopting Ordinance #791 to amend the Zoning Map of the City of Alma as it appears in Section 32-32 of the Ordinances of the City of Alma. This Ordinance is to rezone the property located at 418 Woodworth, City of Alma, Gratiot County, Michigan from B-1a, Central Business District to R-1, Single Family Residential subject to the conditions set forth in the Conditional Rezoning Agreement.

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

**No:** None.

Motion by Vice-Mayor Nyman as supported by Commissioner Ayers to approve a resolution authorizing the execution of a Conditional Rezoning Agreement with the City of Alma and Chadwick and Christina Roe, property owners, which conditionally rezones the property located at 418 Woodworth from B-1a, Central Business District to R-1, Single Family Residential.

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

**No:** None.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Commissioner Mott to authorizing the execution of a Cost Sharing Agreement between the City of Alma and RARE Holdings, LLC (Beacon & Bridges) for the Construction of the Scotland Park parking lot.

**Yes:** Allman, Ayers, Mott, Nyman & Piccolo.

**No:** Mapes.

Motion by Vice-Mayor Nyman as supported by Commissioner Ayers to receive the following reports: Parks and Recreation minutes of June 29, 2017, Noxious Weed report June 2017, Building Permit report June 2017, Code Enforcement report June 2017, May 2017 Investment Report and to remove the Investigation Subcommittee Report for further discussion.

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

**No:** None.

Discussion was held on the Investigation Subcommittee report. The Commissioners wanted to open the floor to the public to hear their concerns and questions on the report.

Travis Polish, 321 Allen stated that the audience wanted to hear the Commissioners' comments on the report first before they would ask questions.

Mayor Mapes stated that the subcommittee had met with 21 individuals and was surprised to find out that there is a great deal of unhappiness within the city employees. Budget issues through the years has made the City an unhealthy work place and employees feel retaliation on the job.

Commissioner Piccolo further explained that the subcommittee's objective was to look into the layoffs of police officers and the interviews for the Public Safety Director. They found that these issues were just the symptoms of other real issues. There needs to be policies in place for being respectful and decent to employees. A policy on reduction of staff needs to be developed. What is a good ratio of police officer to citizen?

Commissioner Mott stated that respect and dignity needs to be applied in the City. Having no Human Resource department is not supplying support for employees.

Mayor Mapes addressed the fact that the City Manager by Charter has the right to hire and fire but clearly the most recent layoffs failed are we going to do better in the future. Performance reviews should be in place such as 360 Reviews from the Manager right down to the laborers. They would be done anonymously and the reports would be given to the Commission for review. A telephone hot line service could be started for employees to voice their concerns.

Commissioner Ayers wanted to know how do we as Commissioners fit into the matters.

City Attorney Costanzo reminded the Commissioners that they cannot dictate the hiring or terminations of employees.

City Manager Moore stated that developing a HR department is a budgetary issue and will cost money.

Commissioner Piccolo spoke that people are important enough to find the funds.

Mayor Mapes relayed that the tone of leadership will set the correct atmosphere. Do we have the correct management structure in place?

City Attorney Costanzo reminded the Commissioners that any decisions need to be made in open sessions.

Commissioner Mott felt that there is a real lack of communication.

Commissioner Ayers stated there is a lack of communication from Management to Commissioners.

Commissioner Mott expressed that the Commissioners are not resolving themselves of these issues. We did not do things correctly.

Commissioner Ayers noted that the Commissioners have full time jobs.

Commissioner Mott felt that the retaliation issue is the main problem, it is despicable.

Mayor Mapes opened the floor for Public comment on the report.

Travis Polish, 321 Allen asked what is to be done now?

Mayor Mapes stated that we will have frank discussions on the processes for the next step. We will need to go into closed session to do a performance review of the City Manager.

Commissioner Allman thought that the two major problems were communication and climate. People should be respected.

City Attorney Costanzo is very impressed with how people have the best interests of the City at heart. Budgetary concerns brought about this situation. How it was done may not have been right. Commission acts through the City Manager.

Mayor Mapes relayed; do we have the confidence in our Manager to make changes.

Laurie Wilson, 202 Mechanic said that we need to keep both fire and police on the streets.

Tiffany Boatman, 186 Westview asked if the reason for the layoffs will be made public. She wanted to know now that the fiscal year has ended did the police budget come in over or under budget. The day the layoffs occurred what was the budgetary issue, she stills feels it was retaliation.

Mayor Mapes has no answer for her now but City Manager Moore will need to answer. Authority was given and it was not breached. Layoffs have occurred in other departments over the years.

Commissioner Mott asked why we're the officers hired in October just to let them go in May? It was a disservice to hire them at that time.

Commissioner Piccolo voiced his concern on how is the City going to pay for services.

Commissioner Allman understands it is common practice in business that when employees know that they will be laid off to let them go early then rather than later.

Commissioner Piccolo stated that this is not a common practice. Layoffs need to be respectful. How these layoffs occurred could have been done better. They were done do to budgetary reasons. The budgets for the last few years have been tight and last year we had to use \$300,000 from the General Fund to balance the budget.

Tiffany Boatman asked where the data on the ratios of police officers to citizens came from, she is not sure that those numbers are correct. Was Alma College students part of that citizen total?

Mayor Mapes researched the Michigan State Police data records for those ratios in the report.

Michelle Pitts, 626 Slater wanted the subcommittee to know of her appreciation with the committee for listening to citizens concerns. What is your next step with Management? Will we have an answer in two weeks or six weeks?

Mayor Mapes also wanted to thank the citizens of Alma and stated that at the next meeting the Commission will go into closed session to review the performance of the City Manager and the will come back to open session with one of three possible resolutions either to do nothing or make a positive or negative decision. At this time the search for the Public Safety Director is on hold. We need confidence in the City Manager because it is the City Manager who makes the recommendation for the hiring of the Director.

Mike Pitts, 1005 Fairview is now retired but in his working life he worked on many policy creations and would gladly help the Commission.

Amanda Huff, 570 Charles feels that respect comes from a good leader. Policies are great but only if they are put into action. The Commissioners will need to keep their thumbs on this. You committed to do this work. Let's be proactive not reactive.

Donna Kolar, 4374 Riverview felt that respect and dignity are very important. She asked if there could be a PA System to help the people in the back hear the comments being made? Mayor Mapes stated that they would speak louder. Ms. Kolar stated she has been a business owner for 37 years and the constant thin she hears is that citizens are not respected. She feels that not enough thought was put into moving the Farmers market. She would like more thought given to the merchants downtown.

Lori Ditto, 1360 Charles Apt #3 would like to know if the City can do something to make the developer of the Opera House get the project moving again?

Mayor Mapes stated that the City has reached out to all parties involved but the project is in the court system now.

Laurie Wilson again addressed the Commission with her concerns about a safe community. She wants the police officers returned.

Mayor Mapes stated that the Alma Police Officers are very dedicated and our community is safe.

Les Rosan, 889 Mill wanted to thank the subcommittee. He would like to call attention to the climate of the work place, it should not be pervasive. On Kendra, she has her first amendment right to speak. She is obviously being retaliated against. She has every right to bring civil action. This was an abuse of power by Mr. Moore. She did not deserve this being the only female candidate being yanked, you should take notice.

Kendall Kobel, Alma Police Officer informed the Commission that he is leaving Alma PD because of the climate and the need for too much overtime. One of the laid off officers is still unemployed. He wishes that the City will now bring him back. He stated that other officers may be leaving and to find good replacements will be hard. Officer Kobel wanted to thank the community for standing up for the police. The City is running the current officers into the ground. The staff is short handed. The City needs to bring back the laid off officer.

Laurie Wilson spoke that we all need to respect the men and women of the police force.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Commissioner Mott to receive the Investigation Subcommittee report.

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

**No:** None.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to approve Warrant No. 17-25 and to authorize the City Treasurer to issue checks in payment of all claims.

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

**No:** None.

Commissioner Ayers wanted to thank everyone for being respectful.

Commissioner Piccolo wanted to thank everyone for coming.

Commissioner Allman also wanted to thank everyone for coming.

City Attorney Costanzo echoed the appreciation expressed by the Commissioners.

Mayor Mapes wanted to express his deepest thanks for all the interviewees. We will continue to do our best.

Being no further Commissioner or Public comment Mayor Mapes asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Commissioner Ayers as supported by Commissioner Piccolo to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:40 p.m.

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

**No:** None.

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Gregory S. Mapes, Mayor

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Sheila Letourneau, City Clerk