

APPROVED
November 13, 2017

MARENGO CITY COUNCIL
Special Meeting Minutes
City Council Chambers
132 E. Prairie Street
Marengo, IL 60152
October 16, 2017

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor John Koziol called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Koziol led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present this evening are Mayor John Koziol; Aldermen Matt Keenum, Mike Miller, Michael Smith, Nicole DeBoer, Dennis Hammortree, Brett Martin, Todd Hall, and Steve Mortensen. Also present are Assistant City Administrator Joshua Blakemore, Acting City Attorney David McArdle and Finance Director Jennifer Snelten.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion and Request for Direction on Marengo Cemetery Board

Mayor Koziol spoke about the 2 options being considered regarding the Cemetery Board. The first option would be to appoint new members of the board (as all of the members of the current board have submitted their resignations effective December 15, 2017). The second option would be to dissolve the board and absorb the running of the cemetery through City Hall.

Alderman Hall noted that there is a 3rd option, that being to privatize the cemetery, selling it to a company that would own the land and would be responsible for maintaining, selling, funerals, etc. There are companies that specialize in that, one being Service Corp. Intl. This company has property all over the United States, with 2400 employees. Dignity Funeral Homes is a part of this corporation, which is the company that owns the Marengo-Union Funeral Home. He outlined some of the information that he had on them. Some of the questions posed by the Council: disposition of current perpetual funds, ownership of the house on the grounds, legality of going with privatization, current owners of lots have to agree to the sale?, increased cost of lot due to privatization?, etc. Alderman Hall will research this option more and provide the Council with answers to their questions and concerns.

Assistant City Administrator Blakemore noted that the documents that were requested from the Cemetery Board have been emailed to the Council members. Also, the tenant at the house that is on the cemetery property came to City Hall today asking if there was going to be a change in the rental property.

Alderman DeBoer questioned what would happen with the older section of the cemetery, preserving it and maintaining it if it was privatized.

Attorney McArdle spoke about the process that would be followed if the property was sold.

Alderman Hammortree questioned what the cost would be to go to privatization of the cemetery, and also why other towns chose to go with privatization. Alderman Hall advised that some of the town did not

have funds to maintain the cemeteries, and that was why they sold. As to the cost, he did not have an answer or that.

Next item discussed involved appointment of new cemetery board members, and Alderman Mortensen made suggestions on possible members. Mayor Koziol advised that two individuals have reached out to him to be considered. The main concern would be in filling the position of manager, due to the time that would be involved. The storage of records was discussed, as well as scanning the existing records so they are now stored in a computer program.

There was discussion on expectations of a new board, such as balancing their budget, or coming as close to the projection as possible. Alderman Mortensen reminded the Council that the city cemetery is owned by the City, and it has to be maintained. If that requires levying taxes to do the job properly, then we have to levy taxes. Eliminating the tax levy does not solve the problem. Alderman Hall stated that it was for that reason (the tax levy) that he looked into privatizing the cemetery, which would then eliminate the need for a tax levy. He then reviewed the past years information, comparing the expenses incurred and the funds available. In 2011, the cemetery showed a surplus (or profit) of \$18,800, the City supplemented their income, via the tax levy, by \$35,000. When you take out the tax levy funds, the cemetery that year showed a deficit of \$16,000. In 2012, the tax levy was \$37,741, and the technical profit was \$14,000. If you pull the tax levy money out, the actual loss was \$23,712.

Alderman Mortensen expressed concern that this was the wrong way to look at the cemetery and the expenses incurred, as you can't know when people are going to die, or when they are going to purchase lots, etc.

Alderman Miller questioned what the cost was going to be for the mowing of the cemetery, and Mrs. Richardson advised that she had received a verbal quote for \$32,000. Alderman Miller stated that the cemetery should have sent out a RFQ in order to get competitive bids to do the work.

Alderman DeBoer questioned how quickly the City was going to move on this, since the current board is done the middle of December. With forming a new board, not being sure if we are going to continue the tax levy, and knowing that the current employees are retiring and those positions will need to be filled, the new board will be starting at "ground zero" on all of this.

The final option discussed involved the City staff absorbing the day-to-day work, such as accounting and payroll needs, but there would still need to have someone in charge. Accessibility to the records would be restricted to regular business hours at City hall, which could be a problem after hours and on the weekends. The availability factor (24/7) would apply for deaths, not for people doing research. Assistant City Administrator Blakemore advised that with the staff currently employed, the City would not have adequate time to take on additional duties.

Mayor Koziol asked various aldermen to look further into the options discussed. Matt Keenum will check with other municipalities to see how they are run, and what their expenses are. Todd Hall will research privatizing the property. Josh and Jennifer (Finance Director Snelten) will go over the documentation provided by the cemetery board and see how much of the work could be absorbed by staff. Alderman Mortensen requested that the City put the mowing of the property out for bid now, in order to get a better idea of what the cost could be next spring.

Josh recapped his take on what was discussed, and how the City would proceed at this time.

Finance Director Jennifer Snelten spoke about the previous contact made to bring the handling of the day-to-day paperwork for the cemetery board was done when the staffing of City hall was different. At the

current time, adding that to their work load would be stretching everyone quite thin. She recommended employing someone part time to help with phones, do paperwork, etc.

ADJOURNMENT

Alderman Nicole DeBoer made a motion, seconded by Alderman Todd Hall, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed with a voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM.



Constance J. Borleitner
City Clerk

The City Council approved these minutes on November 13, 2017.