
DATE: Wednesday, February 17, 2021

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: *Held virtually due to Governor's and Mayoral Emergency Orders

The City Council Committee of the Whole of the City of Urbana, Illinois, met in regular session Wednesday, February 17, 2021, at 7:00pm via Zoom. This meeting was rescheduled from Monday, February 15, due to inclement weather.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PHYSICALLY PRESENT: Diane Wolfe Marlin, Mayor; Phyllis D. Clark, City Clerk

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: City Council Members (CM) Bill Brown, Bill Colbrook, Shirese Hursey, Dennis Roberts, Erik Sacks, Maryalice Wu

ELECTED OFFICIALS ABSENT: Jared Miller

STAFF PRESENT: Sheila Dodd, Jason Liggett, Kay Meharry, Carol Mitten, Bryant Serphin, Kat Trotter

OTHERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Pete Resnick; Scott Allen; *Public Input via Zoom:* Allan Max Axelrod; Tracy Chong; Rita Conerly; James Corbin; Colin Dodson; Aimee English; Christopher Hansen; Justin Hendrix; Lena Andrus Walker; Grace Wilken

Chair: Dennis Roberts, Ward 5

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**

With a quorum virtually present, Chair Roberts called the meeting of the Committee of the Whole to order at 7:00pm.

2. **Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

CM Hursey made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 19, 2021 meeting. Motion seconded by CM Colbrook and carried by roll call vote as follows:

Aye: Brown, Colbrook, Hursey, Roberts, Sacks, Wu

Nay: None

3. **Additions to the Agenda**

There were none.

4. **Presentations and Public Input**

a. **Presentation**

1. **Water shutoffs and impending shutoff concerns**

Scott Allen, Citizens Utility Board Environmental Outreach Director and Allan Max Axelrod, #NoAmerenShutoffs Campaign Lead, gave this presentation. Scott Allen spoke about several sources of consumer relief for those experiencing financial hardship. A source for [rent assistance](#) is available through the [Champaign County Regional Planning Commission](#). Allen gave the link to the [Citizen's Utility Board](#), phone, 1-800-669-5559, as well as his email address, sallen@citizensutilityboard.org for anyone who has questions.

Allan Max Axelrod went over statistics for Covid, and reported the winter moratorium protections failed. Axelrod said to date, American Water disconnected over 11,000 households, 20,000 were disconnected by Ameren, and Commonwealth Edison disconnected over 50,000. Axelrod said there is sure to be another spike if utility shutoffs continue.

Discussion ensued. Mayor Marlin reported that the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission received \$6.2 million from the U.S. Treasury to help households with rent and utilities. The phone to call to set up an appointment for this is 877-458-4205. This program also allows property owners to apply on behalf of their tenants.

b. [Public Input](#)

Comments via Zoom included: even though there is plenty of aid available to help people with past due utility and rent payments, it would be better for the utility companies to stop shutoffs; Illinois Commerce Commission did not support the utility moratorium; some utility companies have voluntary disconnection moratoriums and are abiding by those and others are not; municipalities can exert pressure on utility companies to stop shutoffs; First Followers has a response team 24/7 to those in need; the issue with the Human Rights Ordinance is not financial, but ethical; support de-escalation resolution; presence of a gun should not eliminate an attempt to de-escalate a situation; in support of First Followers resolution; Urbana should not be exempt from Human Rights Ordinance; make sure people are safe during pandemic; elected officials are acting unethically; donate to local food pantries this winter and thanks to all who help with that.

5. [Staff Report](#)

City Administrator Carol Mitten reported that the City has been working with Environmental Justice with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) and have been collecting information from Emulsicoat. When the information is received, it will be put in a place where the public can access it. Mitten said the IEPA will be present at the April 6, 2021 Sustainability Advisory Commission meeting. Emulsicoat has been invited to attend as well. The public will have a chance to ask questions of the IEPA and Emulsicoat, as well as voice their concerns.

Administrator Mitten said on March 1, 2021 at 6:00pm there will be a session to talk about a topic to help people understand how the government works. This will be for new council members, sitting council members and candidates for Urbana.

Mayor Marlin reported that the Regional Planning Commission and City staff held a meeting with about 30 landlords to make them aware of the funding available for rent and utilities. The program is available to both renters and property owners.

6. [Resolution No. 2021-02-006R](#): A Resolution Approving a City of Urbana Community Development Block Grant Program Agreement (First Followers Welcome Home Program)

Grants Management Division Manager Sheila Dodd presented this resolution. She said First Followers requested \$20,600 for its Welcome Home program, which supports those leaving the prison system during the pandemic. They provide support and resources to those individuals to help them reenter into the community, and anticipate serving 12 people through December 31, 2021.

After discussion, CM Wu moved to send Resolution No. 2021-02-006R to council with recommendation for approval and to be placed on the consent agenda. Motion seconded by CM Brown and carried by roll call vote as follows:

Aye: Brown, Colbrook, Hursey, Roberts, Sacks, Wu

Nay: None

7. [Ordinance No. 2021-02-004](#): An Ordinance Annexing Certain Territory to the City of Urbana (2005 North Willow Road / Michele R. and William R. Scott)

Planner Kat Trotter presented this ordinance and said that Michele and William Scott requested to have their property at 2005 North Willow Road annexed into the City of Urbana so they are within the City's fire response service area. In regard to possible annexation of other properties in this area,

Trotter said staff had discussed having a neighborhood meeting to encourage other property owners in this area to consider annexation, but annexation would not be forced.

CM Hursey moved to send Ordinance No. 2021-02-004 to council with recommendation for approval on the consent agenda. Motion seconded by CM Colbrook and carried by roll call vote as follows:

Aye: Brown, Colbrook, Hursey, Roberts, Sacks, Wu

Nay: None

8. **Resolution No. 2021-02-007R**: A Resolution Prioritizing Tactical De-Escalation in the Use of Force Policy and Police Transparency in Urbana

This resolution was presented by CM Wu. She wanted something to use as a guide to direct staff and say Council stands behind the principles of de-escalation as a priority and to talk about how use of force is used in the police department. Reports will be a tool to see how many use of force cases there are and the results of the use of force cases. CM Wu said it is also important to have a civilian on the Use of Force Committee. This resolution is not meant to take away from all the work on the use of force policy, but as a supporting document for the policy.

Discussion ensued. CM Roberts read comments from CM Miller. He commented on the process of choosing a nongovernmental employee or civilian to the Use of Force Board, and the appointment process should be clarified as well.

CM Wu moved to send Resolution No. 2021-02-007R to council with recommendation for approval. Motion seconded by CM Hursey.

Discussion ensued, after which the motion to send Resolution No. 2021-02-007R to council was carried by roll call vote as follows:

Aye: Brown, Colbrook, Hursey, Roberts, Sacks, Wu

Nay: None

9. **Ordinance No. 2021-01-003**: An Ordinance Amending City Code Chapter 12 (Exceptions to the Human Rights Ordinance)

City Administrator Carol Mitten presented the draft of this ordinance. She said one issue with the ordinance is the whether the Human Relations Commission (HRC) has jurisdiction over the City. There are two pending cases that cannot be resolved without clarification of the jurisdiction. The second issue is whether the council wants to change the current ordinance regarding the jurisdiction of the HRC over the City.

Mitten said the draft ordinance would add a new section creating a role for the HRC to facilitate compliance by the City and would eliminate the jurisdictional conflicts. The City would only be exempt from divisions three and four. Mayor Marlin added the City has always followed the Human Rights Ordinance, as do the businesses in Urbana.

There was further discussion. Mitten and HRC Vice Chair Pete Resnick responded to questions and concerns from council members. It was decided to adjust a couple of sections in the ordinance and send it to council for consideration.

CM Brown moved to send Ordinance No. 2021-01-003 to council with no recommendation. Motion seconded by CM Hursey and carried by roll call vote as follows:

Aye: Brown, Colbrook, Hursey, Roberts, Sacks, Wu

Nay: None

10. **Council Input and Communications**

CM Roberts announced a couple of things the Sister Cities Committee is working on a project between students from the City of Urbana who would like to practice French and students from

Thionville, France who would like to practice English. He said he has contacted various schools to see if anyone is interested in doing this, and one instructor has shown interest in doing this. CM Roberts said he has also looked into a collaborative music program with Thionville.

CM Colbrook thanked City staff for keeping the streets clear.

CM Brown thanked those who have shoveled sidewalks.

CM Wu announced that the community will have a new area code and beginning February 27, 2021 the numbers 1-217 will have to be included before phone numbers when making calls for the 217 area code.

Input from CM Miller is attached.

13. **Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the Committee, Chair Roberts adjourned the meeting at 9:30pm.

Kay Meharry

Assistant City Clerk

This meeting was recorded and is [viewable on-demand](#).

Minutes Approved: March 1, 2021

From: [! Miller, Jared](#)
To: [!City Council](#)
Cc: [Marlin, Diane](#); [Mitten, Carol](#); [!City Clerk](#)
Subject: Tonight's Meeting
Date: Wednesday, February 17, 2021 2:59:06 PM

Good afternoon,

I've been debating all day but have finally decided that I'm not going to be able to attend tonight's meeting due to illness.

I figured I would share my thoughts with everyone on tonight's agenda items.

Presentation: I invited Scott Allen & Allen Axelrod to present their ongoing concerns, brief history of, and relief measures available to residents at tonight's meeting with regard to water shutoffs and other utility issues. The content should be straightforward but I hope everyone will take something good away from their presentation about what we can do to help residents now and what we may do to help as winter ends and shutoff issues continue.

Resolution 2021-02-006R: I fully support the work being done by First Followers and I am excited that Sheila and the grants folks have put together CDBG funds for their new Welcome Home program. I hope everyone will approve the City's offer of support via CDBG of this program.

Ordinance 2021-02-004: I have no issues with the annexation request and support a recommendation of approval of the ordinance.

Resolution 2021-02-007R: My thanks to Maryalice for bringing this forward. This substantive resolution makes clear the intention of those on the Council who believe that the City/UPD need to prioritize de-escalation in a manner of seriousness not yet presented or demonstrated. I support this resolution and it's intent.

My one question, should everyone find Section 2 amenable, is about whom shall be appointed as a civilian/non-government employee to the Use Of Force board. It would be preferential if language was included to clarify who makes this appointment and that either the Council or the CPRB should either make or at the very least approve the appointment if the appointment is to be brought forward by the Mayor. I would appreciate everyone's consideration of clarifying this process and adding a measure of involvement in the appointment, whether high or low, to the process for Council or the CPRB.

Ordinance 2021-02-003: I'm not sure where everyone stands on the issue of exempting the City from the HRC but I offer the following philosophical perspectives/points:

1. One primary concern for me is the issue of accountability/transparency for the City of Urbana. Currently there are no independent accountability mechanisms for the actions of the City or it's staff. Yes, there are internal mechanisms for accountability which would be sufficient for any private entity but the City is not a private entity and thus should be held to a higher standard. Perhaps the consideration of creating a truly independent HRC (which I would argue could be expanded to include the CPRB functionality/expansion) is worthy of discussion if you agree with that statement.

2. What message will be sent to the residents of Urbana if the Council votes to approve an exemption for the City from the HRO? Will that serve to squash the issue or will it create further mistrust and anger between concerned citizens and their municipal government? I would argue that the latter is far more likely than the former.

3. This issue, to me, is a discussion at the very core of what kind of community we want Urbana to be. Will we call for certain standards of our neighbors and businesses but not of the City which is charged with serving them? Will we go the extra mile to figure out a way to ensure accountability to those which we serve? I cannot look past the double-standard that it will set if the City can only commit to the "intent" of the HRO in non-binding language alone. I don't know that a truly independent HRO is the answer but surely the addition of the exemption alone is not either.

4. I don't believe a decision must be required on this issue this evening if further discussion/consideration of the issue is warranted. Please consider keeping this in Committee if there is not a clear path forward.

I appreciate everyone's time in reading my message and my best to you all.

Kindly,
- Jared -
(he/his)