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**City of Mt. Vernon, Illinois
Regular City Council Meeting
Monday, October 15, 2012
MINUTES**

The Mt. Vernon City Council held a Regular City Council Meeting on Monday, October 15, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. at the Rolland W. Lewis Community Building, Veterans Park, 800 South 27th Street, Mt. Vernon, IL.

Mayor Mary Jane Chesley called the meeting to order.

The Invocation was given by a member of the Jefferson County Ministerial Association.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ROLL CALL

Roll call showed present: Council Members Ron Lash, Dennis McEnaney, Todd Piper, David Wood and Mayor Mary Jane Chesley.

PRESENTATION OF JOURNALS

The Journals for the September 24, 2012 City Council Workshop Meeting and October 1, 2012 Regular City Council Meeting were presented to Council for any additions, deletions or corrections. **Council Member Piper made a motion to approve the Journal as presented. Seconded by Council Member McEnaney. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.**

APPROVAL OF CONSOLIDATED VOUCHERS FOR ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Approval of Consolidated Vouchers for Accounts Payable were presented to Council for Approval. Council Member McEnaney asked for an update on Item #4 Amalgamated Bank of Chicago - \$571,700.00 — 2010A & 2010B GOB bond principal and interest payments. City Manager Ron Neibert noted this is the principal and interest payments for the bonds issued in 2010 that were used to pay for the City's portion of the 34th Street project, a portion of the Veterans & Davidson road project, the Veterans & Davidson sewer and water project, and Wells Bypass sewer project. The City received a \$4 million grant for the Veterans & Davidson road project. The total cost of the project including design, engineering, and supervision was about \$4.5 million. The Food & Beverage Tax implemented in 2008, 1% portion of the Telecommunication Tax, 2 cent per gallon diesel tax, and part of the capital increases in the Public Utility Fund, are being used to pay back the 2010 bonds. Absolutely no property taxes are going to any of these projects. The following capital projects are being paid for with General Corporate Capital, Food & Beverage tax, 1% portion of the Telecommunication tax, 2 cent per gallon diesel tax and

the three capital increases in the Public Utility Fund: #17 Henry, Meisenheimer & Gende - \$40,762.86 — South Davidson and Veterans sewer extension, 42nd Street road reconstruction, West Elevated and Veterans and Davidson roadway extension. Item #30 Rhutasel & Associates - \$2,632.50 – Veterans-Wells Bypass sanitary sewer. Item #31 Round Table Design - \$9,950.00 – Conger Street water main replacement and Shiloh Drive Lift Station. Council Member Lash asked for an explanation for Item #7 Crosswalk Community Action Group - \$32,151.00 – administration and inspection fees for housing rehabilitation grant 11-243007. Crosswalk Community Action Agency administers the program on behalf of the City of Mt. Vernon. A target area within the city was selected after reviewing the results of a random survey to determine the area most in need of eligible homeowners.

Council Member Wood made a motion to approve the Consolidated Vouchers for Accounts Payable in the amount of \$1,615,121.57. Seconded by Council Member Lash. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

BIDS & QUOTES

BID TABULATION										FGM Architects				
Project Name:		New Aquatic Facility - City of Mt. Vernon - REBID					Witness #1		George Bryant					
Project Number:		11-1350.02 - REBID					Witness #2		Bryan Mason					
							Date:		October 10, 2012, 2:00 p.m.					
Contractor	Bid Bond	Addenda					Base Bid	Alternates				Low Bidder Alternate #1	Low Bidder Alternate #2	Low Bidder Alternate #1 & #2 Combined
		1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4			
Fager McGee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Net Acknowledged	\$ 4,962,000.00	\$ 64,000.00	\$ 99,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,026,000.00	\$ 5,061,000.00	\$ 5,125,000.00
L Wolf Construction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		\$ 5,237,000.00	\$ 53,000.00	\$ 46,000.00	\$ -	\$ (25,000.00)	\$ 5,290,000.00	\$ 5,283,000.00	\$ 5,336,000.00
Poettker Construction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		\$ 5,030,000.00	\$ 46,000.00	\$ 48,000.00	\$ -	\$ (5,000.00)	\$ 5,076,000.00	\$ 5,078,000.00	\$ 5,124,000.00
River City Construction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		\$ 5,017,000.00	\$ 37,000.00	\$ 46,700.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,054,000.00	\$ 5,063,700.00	\$ 5,100,700.00
Shores Builders	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		\$ 4,980,000.00	\$ 52,781.00	\$ 46,799.00	\$ -	\$ (15,000.00)	\$ 5,032,781.00	\$ 5,026,799.00	\$ 5,079,580.00

City Manager Neibert noted that five bids were received for the new Aquatic Facility REBID with Shores Builders of Centralia, IL submitting the low bid of \$5,079,580.00. The budgeted amount for the project is \$6 million. Neibert recommended to the Council that the low bid be accepted. Parks Director George Bryant stated that the first bids submitted were \$1.6 million over the budgeted amount for the Aquatic facility so the bids submitted tonight are the result of a rebid. Director Bryant, Neibert and the Architects reviewed the original proposal and scaled down several items such as simpler construction, lighting, underground pipe size, and shade tarps. None of the features were eliminated.

Council Member Wood noted it is his understanding there was a lot of overbuild in the first bid specifications. Director Bryant agreed. Council Member Wood instructed the City Manager to carefully monitor these types of large projects to prevent overbuilding in the future.

Demolition of the old pool at Veterans Park is included in the rebid specifications. He foresees demolition to be completed between now and completion of the new facility. For now a grassy area will be installed at the location of the old pool. The underground plumbing is not adequate to utilize for anything else. The opening date for the facility is July 4, 2013. Shores Builders has agreed to make every effort to speed up the project.

Council Member Wood remarked that a reserve in the capital fund should be planned for in case the

income projections are not met.

Mayor Chesley noted that the study conducted by the consultants contained a projected budget and revenue based upon suggested fees. The facility should either break even or possibly make a few dollars during the first year. The City intends to operate the facility on a break even basis.

Council Member McEnaney thanked the Parks Committee, Director Bryant and City Manager Neibert for their work in the rebidding process.

Council Member McEnaney made a motion to approve the low bid from Shores Builders of Centralia, IL for the Aquatic Facility in the amount of \$5,079,580.00. Seconded by Council Member Lash. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

Director Bryant continued by listing benefits of the new Aquatic Center to our community including children, teens, adults and senior citizens. Most important is the opportunity to teach our children how to swim. Mt. Vernon is located between two of the largest lakes in the State of Illinois and our children utilize those lakes. A swim scholarship program is being developed in order to teach as many children as possible to swim. Bryant suggested that service organizations and citizens contact his office to identify children in need of the scholarship. His goal is to teach every child in town how to swim. The facility design will include multiple bodies of water allowing for many different kinds of swim lessons and exercise classes.

Director Bryant asked citizens to forward to him old photos of the two pools that were located in Veterans Park as well as old stories about the pools to be included in a photo and story contest. He asked that contest items be submitted to his office by noon on Monday, October 22, 2012. The winners will receive coverage by the local newspapers as well as a free family pass to the Aquatic facility. Some of the photos will then be displayed at the new facility.

Bryant announced that the groundbreaking ceremony for the Aquatic facility will be held on Thursday, October 25, 2012 at 11:30 a.m. at the building site located at 34th and Veterans Memorial Drive. All citizens, children and families are invited to attend. There is no school scheduled on October 25th. A drawing for two family swimming passes will be held. A former park celebrity will be appearing at the groundbreaking.

Council Member Lash commended Director Bryant, and the Parks Board, for their hard work and dedication to the Parks and Recreation Department. This venue will give children and families an activity located here in Mt. Vernon so our citizens are not traveling to another community for their entertainment.

Council Member Piper recognized Director Bryant for his commitment to the quality of life section of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

CITY MANAGER

City Manager Neibert presented for Council's consideration a Request for Approval of the Motor Fuel Tax Funds Audit for 2011. The Illinois Department of Transportation conducted the audit and found no major issues.

Council Member Wood made a motion to approve the Request for Approval of the Motor Fuel Tax Funds Audit for 2011. Seconded by Council Member Piper. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

City Manager Neibert presented for Council's Consideration a Request for Permission to Seek Bids on an Overhead Garage Door for the Fleet Services Department. This is a budgeted capital item.

Council Member Lash made a motion to approve the Request for Permission to Seek Bids on an Overhead Garage Door for the Fleet Services Department. Seconded by Council Member McEnaney. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

City Manager Neibert presented for Council's Consideration a Request for Permission to Seek Quotes for Investing Bond Proceeds. Depending on the outcome of Agenda Item 9-A, the closing for the bonds is scheduled for tomorrow, October 16, 2012.

Council Member Wood made a motion to approve the Request for Permission to Seek Quotes for Investing Bond Proceeds. Seconded by Council Member Lash. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

City Manager Neibert presented for Council's Consideration a Request for Permission to bypass Formal Bidding Procedures for the Purchase of two Cardiac Monitors for the Fire Department. Two of the four monitors presently in use will become obsolete and no longer serviceable as of January 1, 2013. In order to maintain the current level of advanced life support for the citizens of Mt. Vernon the monitors need to be replaced. The quote from Physio-Control, a single source provider, is for \$51,511.50.

Council Member McEnaney made a motion to grant the Request for Permission to bypass formal bidding procedures for the purchase of two Cardiac Monitors for the Fire Department. Seconded by Council Member Wood. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

CITY ATTORNEY

City Attorney Bill Howard presented for Council's consideration a First Reading, and with waiver of the rules for first reading, for the adoption of an Ordinance of the City of Mount Vernon, Jefferson County, Illinois, Providing for the Issuance of General Obligation Bonds, Series 2012, Providing the Details of Such Bonds and for a Levy of Taxes to Pay the Principal of and Interest of Such Bonds and Related Matters.

City Manager Neibert clarified this is the same Ordinance that was approved by the City Council at their Regular City Council Meeting held on Monday, October 1, 2012 albeit with some minor changes recommended by the Bond Attorney relating to the date of passage. The Bond Attorney had issues with how the Ordinance was listed on the City Council Meeting Agenda in terms of meeting requirements of the Open Meetings Act and suggested that the Council re-pass the ordinance. The ordinance and the process followed by the Council are correct. This ordinance authorizes the principal issuance of bonds in the amount of \$36 million. He stated a lot of time and community effort, starting in February 2012, has gone into planning and moving towards implementing many of these projects to be funded by these bonds. In March the Council began discussing the approval of a ½ cent sales tax increase to pay for a portion of the projects and then passed Ordinance No. 2012-10 at a Second Reading at a meeting held

March 26, 2012. The Council met several times at retreats over the summer to further discuss and prioritize the projects listed in the Comprehensive Plan.

The bonds have been very well received in the market place. The City is receiving \$36 million in net proceeds tomorrow. The City is paying out \$801,000.00 in costs yet the principal that the City is paying on over 20 years is \$35.5 million because the bond market buyers paid a premium for the bonds. The City is receiving \$36.8 million in financing for \$35.5 million in principal debt for a 20-year period.

Council Member McEnaney asked if property tax will be used to pay back the bonds. Only in the event that the revenues already pledged to pay – public utility capital fund, ½ cent home rule sales tax, 1% food and beverage tax, 2 cent diesel fuel tax and 1% portion of the telecommunication tax – are not adequate to meet the annual debt service payment, there will be no property taxes required to pay these bonds. Based on the current revenues it would take more than a 20% reduction in these funds before other funds would be used.

Council Member Wood remarked that a reserve fund will be established from the bond funds to insure that sufficient money is available to make the bond payments.

Mayor Chesley opened the meeting to allow audience members to address the Council:

Ray Botch, citizen, does not agree with the \$35,555,000.00 general obligation bond issue. He stated he was not here to argue about the timing of the bond issue but rather the financing of the public improvements. The City will receive \$35,555,000.00 from the sale of bonds. The City Manager said \$36 million today. The City will have to repay \$35,555,000.00 plus interest of \$13,486,000.00. This represents about a 71% return on investment which means over a 20 year period of the bond issue the City will be paying 29% in interest. You do the math. What is so alluring about incurring debt? There is a more fiscally responsible way to fund the City's project. It is called, heaven forbid, pay as you go and you don't need a credit card. Instead of putting the home rule pledged revenue aside to pay the principal and interest on the bonds, earmark the pledged revenues into a strategic plan fund. Based on the City's projections \$2.6 to \$3 million a year would be available for projects instead of four principal and interest payments. You couldn't do all the projects at once, like the bond issue, but you would not be giving away \$13.5 million in interest payments. The taxpayer will have 100% return on their investment. He believes that the \$13.5 million in interest payments would be better spent on brick and mortar projects, something that is touchy/feely, rather than payments to some bond holder which is like flushing money down the toilet. He's just one citizen who says enough with the current spending habits. Let's get back to some fiscal sanity. He's for progress. He strongly believes in home rule which gives Mt. Vernon the tools to solve its problems. However, he is against what he views as fiscal insanity. We are fortunate here in America. We have the right and privilege to disagree and he thanked the Council for their time.

Jere Shaw stated he was not going to speak this evening but decided to when he saw the agenda and heard how the projects are to be funded. On Agenda Item 9-A it says "...and for the levy of taxes to pay the principal of and interest on such bonds..." What does that mean? City Manager Neibert explained that the ordinance allows for the levy of taxes for the bonds provided that the revenues from the pledged funds (the home rule funds) are not adequate to meet the need. The City will pass an annual ordinance abating that tax levy. City Attorney Bill Howard noted that this language is in every yearly levy ordinance. Mr. Shaw stated he doesn't have access to any levy ordinances. City Attorney Howard stated they are public record. The end of Agenda Item 9-A says "...and related matters." What does

that mean? City Attorney Howard remarked that there are several pages of information contained in the Ordinance, for instance, the reserve fund that was earlier discussed.

City Manager Neibert stated there is language in this Ordinance that rescinds the previous Ordinance adopted by the City on their bonds.

Council Member Lash noted that the cost of projects will only increase over time and interest rates will increase as well.

Council Member Piper used the analogy of buying a house. When you buy a house you borrow the money to purchase the home. Cities have to borrow money to accomplish these types of projects as well.

Council Member Lash made a motion to Suspend the Rules to take action on the First Reading on Ordinance Providing for the Adoption of an Ordinance of the City of Mt. Vernon, Jefferson County, Illinois, Providing for the Issuance of General Obligation Bonds, Series 2012, Providing the Details of Such Bonds and for a Levy of Taxes to Pay the Principal of and Interest of Such Bonds and Related Matters. Seconded by Council Member McEnaney. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

Council Member Lash made a motion to approve Ordinance #2012-37 Ordinance Providing for the Adoption of an Ordinance of the City of Mt. Vernon, Jefferson County, Illinois Providing for the Issuance of General Obligation Bonds, Series 2012, Providing the Details of Such Bonds and for a Levy of Taxes to Pay the Principal of and Interest of Such Bonds and Related Matters. Seconded by Council Member Piper. Mayor Chesley asked the Council for any comments:

Council Member Wood stated there were a number of excellent comments made earlier. He used Council Member Piper's analogy to put this into shirt sleeve understanding. Pay as you go may make a nice bumper sticker but the reality is – that's not what municipalities do when they take on these major commitments. This City has gone way too long prior to this council coming on board, the City has gone 20 years without the kind of improvements that you now see going on in the City. The streets that are being done, the bicycle trails and sidewalks, some of which may not be popular but these are all things that are moving us in the right direction. He doesn't know anyone who ever built a house for their family to live in who saved up the money to buy the land and then saved more money to do the foundation and then saved up more money to finally put walls up, eventually adding a kitchen and then saving more money over the next few years to build a living room, a bedroom, and eventually, a roof. He submitted that if the City uses the pay as you go method or bumper sticker type government that the next 20 years of Mt. Vernon will look a lot like the previous 20 years before this council came together and made a serious plan and worked to put together the financing that will make it all happen in our lifetimes. Thank you.

Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

City Attorney Howard presented for Council's consideration a First Reading on Ordinance Granting Conditional Use for Freestanding Wireless Communication Facility located at 7 Cusumano Professional Plaza Drive. Petitioning Party is Cellco Partnership. The current zoning classification of the property is B-2, Secondary Business District. The Zoning and Planning Commission approved this conditional use for modification of an existing freestanding wireless communication facility to include replacement of the existing 150 feet monopole with antennas extending to 159 feet above ground level with an adjacent

tower of the same height and for placement of Verizon's antennas and ground equipment at the location. The currently existing monopole will be removed after all equipment is placed on the new monopole. There were no objectors at the Zoning and Planning Commission meeting. A representative from Verizon and Vic Cusumano appeared. They distributed photos to the Mayor and City Council. This tower is made for future growth as opposed to having to place new towers. Council Member Wood inquired as to who is responsible to insure that the tower is located in the correct place. City Manager Neibert noted that is the City Engineer's responsibility. Council Member Wood asked about the urgency to grant the conditional use at this meeting. Their reply is that the equipment is available at this time for the installation and the weather is always a concern.

Council Member Wood stated that given this conditional use was unanimously approved by the City's Zoning and Planning Committee, the public has received some notice, and there is a compelling reason to move ahead due to the weather and construction, he made a motion to Suspend the Rules to take action on the First Reading on Ordinance Granting Conditional Use for Freestanding Wireless Communication Facility Located at 7 Cusumano Professional Plaza Drive. Seconded by Council Member McEnaney. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

Council Member Wood made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 2012-38 Granting Conditional Use for Freestanding Wireless Communication Facility Located at 7 Cusumano Professional Plaza Drive. Seconded by Council Member Piper. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

City Attorney Howard presented for Council's consideration a First Reading on Resolution Approving "Proposal to Provide Professional Services Related to the Reconstruction of Perkins Avenue between 12th Street and 10th Street (Illinois Rt. 37), Mt. Vernon, IL" with Horner & Shifrin, Inc. City Manager Neibert commented that he met with the Illinois Department of Transportation and they are suggesting a new alignment of the intersection at 10th & Perkins. IDOT will be partnering with the City on the design engineering but not on the construction cost. IDOT will be funding the Intersection Design Study, and a portion of any traffic signal realignment or reinstallation. From 10th Street to 12th Street on Perkins was not widened at the same time as the remainder of Perkins so this will complete that phase by picking up the project where previous councils left off. This project will also address serious safety issues and storm water issues. The City Engineer was instructed to contact property owners in and along the construction site of the upcoming project. IDOT will be handling all of the land acquisition in this project. The approximate cost of the project will be \$400,000.00 – the City's cost will be \$325,000.00 and the State's cost will be \$75,000.00. Bicycle lanes will be installed similar to the rest of Perkins since it is a thoroughfare between Dawson Park, Veterans Park and the Aquatic Center.

Council Member Lash made a motion to adopt a Resolution Approving "Proposal to Provide Professional Services Related to the Reconstruction of Perkins Avenue between 12th Street and 10th Street (Illinois Rt. 37), Mt. Vernon, IL" with Horner & Shifrin, Inc. Seconded by Council Member Wood. Yeas: Lash, McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

MAYOR

Mayor Chesley issued a proclamation in support of It Can Wait. The program is affiliated with AT & T, and the Illinois Municipal League has urged mayors to come out in support and encourage citizens to support the campaign. She proclaimed this week as "It Can Wait" week. Use of cell phones and texting has become an epidemic, according to statistics. According to a poll conducted by Students Against Drunk Driving and Liberty Mutual Insurance Group, cell phone use accounts for 2,600 vehicle fatalities

and 300,000 collisions annually. Chesley added some statistics to the proclamation itself.

Whereas we hold the health and safety of our young adults as a chief concern; and whereas text messaging is the main mode of communication for most American teenagers with half of all teens sending between 21 and 70 text message a day; and whereas 90 percent of American teenagers expect to reply to a text message within five minutes; and texting takes one's eyes off the road for an average of five Seconds; and whereas in an AT & T survey, 43 percent of American teenage drivers admitted to texting while driving even though 97 percent know it is dangerous ... a driver that sends a text message while driving not only jeopardizes his or her safety, but also the safety of passengers, pedestrians and other drivers.

At this time, Illinois law states that drivers 18 years and younger are not to use cell phones while driving — even if they have a hands-free device. All drivers are prohibited from text messaging, e-mailing and Internet use while driving; and cell phone use is prohibited in school speed zones and construction zones. In July, it became illegal in Illinois for commercial drivers to text or use a handheld cell phone while driving; to use cell phones within 500 feet of an emergency scene; and use cell phones in roadway work zones.

Chesley urged all departments of government, civic, schools fraternal and patriotic groups and all citizens to support the program.

AT & T has also created a no-text pledge between teens and parents: “No text message, e-mail, website or video is worth the risk of endangering my life or the lives of others on the road. I pledge to never text and drive and will take action to educate others about the dangers of texting while driving. No text is worth the risk, it can wait.”

CITY COUNCIL

Council Member Piper asked Mary Ellen Bechtel to report on a trip to the International Council of Shopping Centers gathering in Chicago with Mayor Chesley and City Manager Neibert. Ms. Bechtel reported the first time they attended this event several years ago it was difficult to get appointments with retail developers and they probably threw our information away. Over the past year, she is getting calls from developers and for this event the developers were calling her for appointments and interest in Mt. Vernon. Having \$.5 billion of investment by companies in the City, having 1,000 jobs created, the City doing everything that developers need has put Mt. Vernon on the map. Developers are not hearing that message in other communities. She thanked the City Council for making bold, progressive decisions. The Council made the decision to move the City forward and JCDC is thankful for the good working relationship with the Council and their support. This is a tipping point. She is excited to talk with developers about all the great things that are happening in the City encouraging them to be partners with the City and bring their investment to Mt. Vernon.

Ms. Bechtel further stated that when the last census figures were released the City of Mt. Vernon was down 1,200 residents and that was the third time in a row the population had decreased in the City. The Council asked, “What has caused this and what can we do to fix it?” The Council has been willing to do everything required to fix it. Housing was identified as an issue so the City contracted with Zanola Company to complete a housing study. Realtors have told us that the City does not have the type of housing that people are looking for at the price range that they need. The study will help land developers to understand the City's market. This great opportunity with new jobs attracting more

people to live in Jefferson County at a time when developers are coming off of losses and even losing their businesses in the housing development in other larger markets. It's not an easy story to tell when we ask housing developers to come to Mt. Vernon, but they respond with "but your population is down." Ms. Bechtel thanked the Council for their support, for the direction they're taking the City, and being willing to make the tough decisions and say, "yes we can do it and yes we will do it."

According to City Manager Neibert, the new interchange is in a TIF area. However, there is only about \$500.00 in the TIF fund. If incentive is needed to attract developers to the area it is possible to offer them an incremental amount of TIF dollars that is created by their project over a period of time. Unfortunately, many of them don't want that. Developers are also looking for assistance through sales tax rebates. Part of the process to bring Kohl's to Mt. Vernon was an incentive package in the form of reimbursing a portion of our home rule sales tax to them. More and more developers, particularly big box store developers, are looking for incentives not only in the form of TIF but in the form of sales tax agreements. The City has the ability to issue TIF notes backed by the incremental revenues to be created by a project. Council Member Wood stressed that TIF has been successful in Mt. Vernon but it takes time to develop the funds and the funds are not there now.

Council Member Wood directed his comment to Ray Botch that while he doesn't agree with everything Mr. Botch said earlier in the meeting, he does appreciate his words of support for home rule and Mr. Botch, as a past City Manager, understand the importance of that for the development of a community.

Council Member Piper spoke regarding the Harvest Fest, www.mtvernonfallfest.com, 242-3151, to be held this weekend, October 19, 20 & 21. There are over 90 entries in the parade including 14 marching bands, live entertainment and kids' carnival rides. The sponsors and volunteers have been incredible. This will be an event not seen before in Mt. Vernon.

VISITORS/CITIZENS REQUESTS/ADDRESSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

Dick Acklin, retired taxpayer in Mt. Vernon, inquired about the Aquatic Center. Is there a pool in a building for year round use? Mayor Chesley answered no. What were the bid totals? City Manager Neibert stated that the budgeted amount for the project is \$6 million including construction costs and soft costs. The first bids came in at \$6.7 million for construction and \$900,000.00 for soft costs making the bids well over \$6 million. Mr. Acklin calculated that the bids were about 26% over budget. There had to be some massive changes or deletions to eliminate that kind of money from the project. He wonders if the City is getting the project that they think they are. His entire working career was in mechanical contracting plumbing, heating and ventilating. This is a range out of the normal limits. City Manager Neibert commented there were approximately 30 items addressed in terms of reducing the \$1.7 million. One of them was the shade canopy. That item alone was \$300,000.00. We are getting a facility that will meet its intended goal and the main functional features of the facility are still in place. Mr. Acklin stated to beware of consultant's economic studies and estimates. They can be very misleading and a local example of that is the Jefferson County Jail. Thank you.

Ray Botch asked to respond to Council Member Wood and asked him for some of those bumper stickers that say pay as you go. He'd like to give them to the citizens of Westmont. The City Hall, Police & Fire Facility, Fire Station, Westmont Center which houses Senator Curt Dillard who was almost a candidate for Governor, and a commuter station were all pay as you go. They also have an ISO rating of Class II which means that your water system has to be completely up-to-date. The Police & Fire Departments are nationally accredited so pay as you go works. For Mr. Wood to say that it doesn't is a universal

statement. It works in some communities and Mr. Wood should admit that. Council Member Wood remarked that it is too bad that Mr. Botch didn't get some of those things done when he was the City Manager working with the City Council here in Mt. Vernon. Mr. Botch replied that when he was City Manager he opened the west side of the Interstate and General Tire came into Mt. Vernon. He observed that Rolland Lewis did more than Mr. Wood will do in his life.

James Rippy, retired Mt. Vernon citizen, stated that he participates every morning at a fitness center in Mt. Vernon. Several older gentlemen also attend the fitness center. They have different opinions and don't all agree on the issues discussed daily. Not to degrade the Council or anything they are doing but there is concern that people are being left out of the process as the City Council goes about their business. Some are for home rule and some are against everything, but the underlying feeling is that the folks are not being allowed enough input in the decisions being made by the City. Mayor Chesley asked how he suggests this be improved. He commented that during his work career he always wanted to have at least 80/20%. Even when you have 51% you still have 49% that are really irritated with you. He suggested to get more information to the people and more widespread.

Mayor Chesley advised that the City Council meetings are broadcast on the local radio station. Council meetings, workshops and retreats are published in the newspaper. Mr. Rippy noted that a lot of people aren't engaged in the election process or City Council actions. They believe that some elitist group is giving the Council guidance. He asked the Council to take his comments as a positive contribution.

City Manager Neibert directed everyone's attention to the acknowledgements page in the City's Comprehensive Plan, as follows: **Steering Committee Chair** Dr. Nick Osborne; **Economic Development** Mary Ellen Bechtel, Ray Botch, Brandon Bullard, Mary Burgan, Greg Martin, Rick Pigg; **Infrastructure** Elbert Cain, Rex Cusumano, Matt Fauss, Tammy Klebba, Ron Kruep, John Porter, Scott Rakers, Marcia Scott, Alan Troutt, David Wood; **Land Use** Dean Dickerson, Bruce Flanigan, Carey Lipps, Dennis McEnaney, Ron Neibert, Kevin Phillips, Jackie Sharp, Dorothy Wood, former councilman Mike Walker; **Quality of Life** George Bryant, Brenda Cain, Dennis Hoffman, Todd Piper, Shirley Roney, Kevin Settle, Greg Simms, former councilwoman Shirilyn Holt.

Mr. Rippy stated it was not his intention to argue, but there are a lot of middle class people or slightly above and lower class people that need this message more. The City must take a diagonal slice of the population in order to get the needed feedback because if you don't include everyone then you have people that just say "yes boss", "yes boss".

Mayor Chesley reminded that the City's website is up-to-date and she encourages citizens to use the website to stay informed. She understands that some people don't have televisions or newspapers but citizens must take some responsibility for keeping themselves informed.

Council Member Lash commented that since he has been on the City Council he has come to understand that a lot of people are not engaged in the process until they feel threatened or perceive a threat. He has tried in his own small way to inform citizens in his sphere of influence. There are many that don't read the newspaper or listen to the radio but get their news by whatever means and in many cases it is not accurate. Since being on the City Council he has not engaged nor has the Council been engaged in any perceived actions to try to deceive the public. No matter how much you try to inform the public there are those that won't get the message. It is important to get out as much information as you can and he believes the City is doing that. Newspapers have limited space for a particular article. When citizens learn of an issue that they want to engage in then it is their responsibility to contact the City –

Mayor, City Council Members, City Manager. In order for citizens to get engaged in the process they have a responsibility to do so and not wait until an issue is “threatening” before they become engaged. We have two Council meetings per month on the first and third Mondays. At one time there was only one Council meeting per month. Unless there is an issue that is controversial very few citizens will attend the Council meetings. Council Member Lash encouraged all citizens to keep informed, engaged in the process and attend Council meetings.

Jere Shaw stated that in one vote and a stroke of the pen, City Council passed an ordinance to issue \$36 million in bonds. Do you realize in the whole history of Mt. Vernon the City Council has never passed a total amount of \$36 million but this City Council did it in one stroke? City Manager Neibert asked where Mr. Shaw got that information. Mr. Shaw stated he didn’t research all the way back to 1819 but looked in the Register News. He stated that in the last 50 years the Council hasn’t passed bonds totaling \$42 million. It stands to reason that if the Council didn’t do it in the last 50 years, it wasn’t done in the first 50 years from 1819 and so on. Mr. Shaw inquired if the Council considered putting the issuance of bonds before the voters. Just because you are a home rule city doesn’t mean you can’t do that. Why didn’t you do that? Anyone care to comment? This is the very same thing that happened with the Jefferson County Jail.

Council Member McEnaney addressed Mr. Shaw. He stated he is against property taxes. To complete the \$36 million in projects would place an unfair burden on property taxes and property owners. He believes it is a more fair way to get the money to finance these projects. Also, the 50 years of research Mr. Shaw performed is one of the reasons the City has lot population over the last three censuses. Forty years ago there was an increase in population but since that time people have been leaving Mt. Vernon because of things that don’t fit their family’s style. New businesses and citizens want an improved quality of life. They want the infrastructure fixed, streets without pot holes, nice sidewalks and bike trails. That is why he decided the issuance of bonds was the right thing to do. A great deal of discussion has gone into this decision. The fair approach is to create a sales tax that doesn’t impact all of our citizens because 60% comes from people living outside of Mt. Vernon.

Mr. Shaw said you can’t go wrong when you trust the people. You can’t go wrong when you trust the people and you guys should have done that.

Council Member McEnaney again addressed Mr. Shaw. He was voted into office by the people. He believes that with time and money to educate Mt. Vernon’s citizens, he feels confident they would all approve what the Council has done. He believes the Council is doing the right thing to move this City forward and that is why he voted to issue bonds.

Mr. Shaw said we must be talking to different people. Maybe they would. Thank you.

Donte Moore, a member of the Park Board, reported on the 3rd annual Fall Family Fun Day at Veterans Park. Approximately 1,500 people attended the free of charge event. S’mores, hotdogs, and chili were served. He thanked the fire fighters and police department, Mt. Vernon Rams Freshman football team, Kiwanis, Director Bryant and Wes Plummer, and Logan Street Baptist Church for a great time and a successful event.

Steven Casper addressed an earlier comment that the people probably would have voted to approve all of the projects through these sales taxes. You may be right. If you put it to a vote the citizens may have said yes and given you a ½ cent but the citizens would have decided. The voters would have decided

whether or not they wanted to fund the things that the City Council wants to do. It wouldn't have been just your choice, but our choice. There's nothing that makes me madder than somebody taking my money without asking. That's the issue here. It's not what the city is doing. It's that the City is not asking. The city is just taking and that is why he got this whole thing started because he was fed up with the city taking and not asking. Effingham, a town just like Mt. Vernon, built on two interstates, has a tax rate at 6.5%. Why is Mt. Vernon at 8 and 9%? City Manager Neibert interjected that the City of Effingham, for 23 years had a sales tax TIF. At that time a sales tax TIF allowed a community not only to take the incremental properties taxes it also allowed them to take the incremental sales taxes and not just the City's portion but the 5% state's portion. The City of Effingham had a large influx of state revenues into their community. That's why their tax rate is less than Mt. Vernon's. Mr. Casper asked why Mt. Vernon doesn't have that. City Manager Neibert stated that he would have to ask the City Manager and the City Council from 25 years ago as to why they didn't implement sales tax TIF. Mr. Casper continued by saying that nobody wants to move to a town with high taxes and that's why businesses are asking City's like Mt. Vernon for TIF help. They don't want to come to Mt. Vernon with its high taxes unless the town is going to give them something and nobody else wants to move here either with high taxes. That's why Kohl's asked for TIF money and home rule money because they weren't coming here without it. City Manager Neibert remarked that six years ago the City of Mt. Vernon was in competition with Effingham for the Kohl's store. Effingham got the store by creating a special business district that implemented an increase in the sales tax in that specified area. You are correct. In most of Effingham the sales tax is 6.25% but in the portion of Effingham where Kohl's is located the sales tax is 7.25% because they created a special business district to fund to Kohl's which is very similar to what the City of Mt. Vernon did with the home rule tax. The City did not have to create a special business district to provide the incentive to Kohl's because we already had the home rule tax in place to allow doing that. Mr. Casper repeated that businesses aren't coming to a town with high taxes. Nobody wants to come to a town with high taxes. Nobody wants to build a \$100,000 or \$200,000 home in a town with high taxes. That is one of the reasons why Mt. Vernon is probably shrinking.

Council Member Piper noted that a housing developer just starting construction on four duplexes with plans for 22 in total and these duplexes are located south of Broadway.

Mr. Casper corrected his earlier statement to say that "few" people want to move to this town and "few" businesses want to come to Mt. Vernon.

City Manager Neibert again interjected that he recently heard Marion Mayor Bob Butler on the radio state that Marion has special tax zones and star bond district, but their City property tax is lower than Mt. Vernon's so if businesses are going to come to communities with low tax then why did Marion have to implement their special districts, why did they have to get a special star bond certification, to bring development to their community.

Mr. Casper remarked that saves the businessman money but it doesn't save him money. Don't get him wrong. The City needs businesses and jobs, but we can't support businesses on the backs of the taxpayers.

Council Member Piper commented that he wished the playing field was level, but the City has to compete with Marion, Effingham and others nearby.

Mr. Casper stated that he just wants to be asked before they take money from his pocket. That's all he's asking.

City Manager Neibert stated the problem with Mr. Casper's proposal. As you said at the meeting the other night with Roger Huebner (Deputy Director of the Illinois Municipal League) that if we eliminated home rule the city can still get taxes by referendum and that is partially correct. Yes, the City could implement a non-home rule sales tax and the non-home rule sales tax is voted by referendum. Unfortunately, the statutory limitations on that tax are limited to only infrastructure and to property tax relief. The City has spent over \$1.5 million purchasing fire trucks. We could not do that with a non-home rule sales tax. The only way to pay for those fire trucks, parks, or pools are by referendum, but those referendums are only to approve property tax increases to pay for those improvements. There are no referendum sales taxes to pay for parks, pools or fire trucks. That vote would have to be put to the voters but then the voters have to bear 100% of the cost. Would you rather have home rule sales tax where 60% of those revenues are coming from people who don't reside here? We're getting 100% of a pool at a 60% discount.

Mr. Casper noted if the pool is such a great idea why isn't a business building it? Just keep home rule but give us our rights. Let the voters vote. If you want the rules that home rule gives City Council so they can raise funds and this and that just ask us before you take our money. Please ask us.

Council Member Piper encouraged everyone that wants to get involved in the Comprehensive Plan when it is revisited because it is a living and breathing document.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session was held.

ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Piper made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Council Member Wood. Yeas: Lash McEnaney, Piper, Wood and Chesley.

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The meeting was adjourned at 8:50p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerilee Hopkins
City Clerk