

**City of Olivet  
Regular Council Minutes  
February 10, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.**

**Council Call to Order**

Present: Mayor Laura Barlund-Maas and Commissioners Joseph Davis, Joe Hoffdahl, James Frohm, Larry Marsh, and Gary Peterson.

Absent: Don Walker during roll call. Walker arrived at 7:03 p.m.

**Visitors' Section:**

The University of Olivet Alpha Xi Omega/ELITE Fraternity member Rashawn Mersier asked the Council's permission for road closures to host their annual Black Lives Matter March on April 2.

The University of Olivet Alpha Phi Kappa Fraternity Kem Blessingame asked the Council's permission for road closures to host their annual Block Party on April 12.

Mayor Laura Barlund-Maas stated that their requests would need to be added to the evening's agenda.

**Approval of Agenda**

**MOTION** by Marsh, supported by Hoffdahl, to approve the agenda with the following additions: Add a new Item A. The University of Olivet Alpha Xi Omega/Elite Fraternity Black Lives Matter March Road Closures. Add a new Item B. The University of Olivet Alpha Phi Kappa Fraternity Block Party Road Closures, moving each agenda item down. Motion carried 7-0.

**Approval of Previous Minutes**

**MOTION** by Walker, supported by Davis, to approve the January 13, 2025, minutes as written. Motion carried 7-0.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. Project Update**

**1. Ordinance Book Amendments**

Mayor Barlund-Maas stated progress has begun and some ordinance amendments will be discussed this evening.

**2. City Policies (Handbook) – Lexipol**

Clerk/Treasurer Amy Huepenbecker informed the Council that she has not had the opportunity to review City policies. She stated as the workload slows down at the end of the month she will continue with the policy reviews.

**3. Police Department Policies – Lexipol**

Police Chief Shawn Garcia informed the Council that he continues to work on department policies. He stated that he has also been working on job descriptions for the Chief of Police and other positions.

**4. Parks Master Plan**

Commissioner Joe Davis stated that the Parks Master Plan is still moving forward and was discussed at the last Parks Board Meeting. Any actions that need to be taken will happen at the next Parks Board Meeting on April 1, 2025.

**5. Fire Station Committee**

Mayor Barlund-Maas stated that a Lee Township representative needs to be found for the committee. Fire Chief John Collins stated that Brad Shrontz has agreed to be the representative for Lee Township. Mayor Barlund-Maas stated that she has a meeting scheduled with the President of The University of Olivet regarding City business.

**6. Sign Ordinance Amendment**

Huepenbecker stated that the amendment to the signed ordinance is on the agenda.

**7. Emergency Plan – City**

Huepenbecker stated that she has started reviewing emergency plan templates that she received from Eaton County. She hopes the templates will help get an emergency plan in place for the City.

**8. Event Form**

Davis stated that there has been no change to report.

**9. New Attorney**

Mayor Barlund-Maas stated there has been no change to report. Davis provided the Council with a document from the City Charter titled “Administrative Service” that he feels is relevant to this situation. Davis read an excerpt from the document and stated that it sounded like the Council should put together the appointment for an attorney. Mayor Barlund-Maas agreed that the Council could make the appointment, which would include her. Commissioner Gary Peterson expressed his concern about finding a qualified attorney versus a less expensive attorney. Mayor Barlund-Maas agreed with Peterson and stated that the attorney she has been speaking with is very experienced with City law because that is what he does, but the cost for any attorney experienced in municipal law will be higher. Huepenbecker suggested sending any potential attorney candidate a request for proposal (RFP) for the scope and fees for their services. Mayor Barlund-Maas suggested sending her recommendation for an attorney to the personnel committee for discussion. Peterson suggested calling the Michigan Municipal League to see if they could furnish a list of attorneys in the area. Chief Garcia suggested sending RFPs to attorneys of other local municipalities. Mayor Barlund-Maas stated that City Hall has reached out to other municipalities, and we have their recommendations. Discussion took place regarding how many attorneys to send the RFP to.

**10. Removal of Parking Spaces – The University of Olivet**

DPW Director Jerry Staggs stated the removal of parking spaces is on hold until Spring.

**11. Traffic Study – Engineering Firm**

Staggs stated the traffic study is on hold until Spring.

## **12. Compensation Committee**

Mayor Barlund-Maas stated that she continues to look for another person or two to serve on the Compensation Committee.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **A. The University of Olivet ELITE Fraternity “Black Lives Matter” Road Closures – Action Item**

The University of Olivet ELITE Fraternity member Rashawn Mersier stated that ELITE would like to hold its annual Black Lives Matter March on April 2, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. He is asking the Council’s permission to use the City’s barricades and to close East, College, and Cottage Streets around the University Square for the march with Main Street to remain open for traffic. Police Chief Garcia suggested Mersier contact Campus Safety to confirm who will be responsible for placing and removing the barricades. Staggs said barricades would be placed at the corners.

**MOTION** by Frohm, supported by Davis, to allow ELITE Fraternity to close East, College, and Cottage Streets around the University Square for the Black Lives Matter March on April 2, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. with the understanding that the fraternity will be responsible for placing and removing the barricades at the stated times. Motion carried 7-0.

#### **B. The University of Olivet Alpha Phi Kappa Fraternity “Block Party” Road Closures – Action Item**

The University of Olivet Alpha Phi Kappa Fraternity Vice President Kem Blessingame said the fraternity would like to hold its annual Block Party on April 12, 2025, from 12:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. He is asking the Council’s permission to use the City’s barricades and to close College Street between Church and East Streets.

**MOTION** by Hoffdahl, supported by Davis, to allow Alpha Phi Kappa Fraternity to close College Street between Church and East Streets for the Block Party on April 12, from 12:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. with the understanding that the fraternity will be responsible for placing and removing the barricades at the stated times. Motion carried 7-0.

#### **C. CD Renewal – Action Item**

Huepenbecker summarized the current and proposed Eaton Community Bank interest rates for the City CDs. She stated the CDs mature on February 14 and asked how the Council would like to proceed. Peterson suggested going with the two-year renewal at 3.85%.

**MOTION** by Peterson, supported by Frohm, to renew the three City CDs for a two-year term with an interest rate of 3.85%. Motion carried 7-0.

#### **D. Ordinance Amendments – Informational Item**

Mayor Barlund-Maas stated that the ordinance amendments will be discussed, but no decisions will be made tonight. She said there will be a public hearing at the March Council meeting.

**Section 4-4 Keeping of Fowl:** A discussion took place regarding the number of chickens that can be kept on the property, the keeping of hens versus roosters, noise and odor of said chickens, enclosures for chickens, slaughtering of chickens, and setbacks for chicken enclosures.

City resident Larry Johnston informed the Council that he has had chickens on his property for two years. He started with four chickens and stated that four chickens may not be enough to produce the desired amount of eggs or justify the price of a coop. He said he currently has thirteen chickens and no roosters. Johnston stated that he had spoken with his neighbor regarding his chickens and the placement of the fully enclosed 20' x 20' coop and said his neighbor has no complaints. Johnston suggested allowing eight chickens and invited the Council to see his set-up for the chickens and the coop to get ideas for the ordinance.

**Section 40-203 Lien; assessment of delinquent rates and charges on tax roll:** A discussion took place regarding combining the water and sewer into one section, keeping it under Section 40-203 regarding a lien and assessments of delinquent rates and charges on the tax roll, and adding the property owner as the one who would be charged.

**Section 42-122 (C) Signs:** Huepenbecker stated that she had spoken with Brandy Miller from Eaton County Building Codes regarding their sign ordinance. Miller told Huepenbecker that the sign ordinance could be as simple as stating "No temporary signs on City property or in the right-of-way (ROW)". Huepenbecker also suggested adding that City employees can remove and discard said sign without notice.

#### **E. Auditor Contract – Action Item**

Huepenbecker provided the Council with a proposal from City Auditors Gabridge & Company, PLC, outlining their proposed fees for the next three fiscal years. She stated that last year's audit fee was \$8,500.00. She called Gabridge regarding the proposed increase. Gabridge told Huepenbecker that the City of Olivet's cost is the lowest, as most other small municipalities are priced over \$15,000.00. Huepenbecker stated that she and City Accountant Kelly Hanna have a good working relationship with Gabridge and would like to continue using their services, or the Council could choose to put out a bid to find a new auditor.

**MOTION** by Walker, supported by Marsh, to approve the three-year contract with Gabridge & Company, PLC for auditing services with a rate not to exceed \$12,025.00 for fiscal year (FY) 2025, \$12,400.00 for FY 2026, and \$12,700.00 for FY 2027. Motion carried 7-0.

#### **F. New Position Police Department – Action Item**

Police Commissioner Davis stated that there were no changes to the hand-out he provided to the Council last month. He stated that he did have the opportunity to speak with Hanna to obtain clarification regarding the budget for the proposed positions being realistic. Davis reminded the Council that the proposal is for a new Chief Administrative position at \$29.00 per hour plus benefits while retaining a Police Chief at a rate of \$33.00 per hour plus benefits and an officer at \$25.00 per hour. He said, unfortunately, this would be more than the City can accommodate. Davis stated that realistically the City can accommodate creating the new Chief Administrative position and retain the Police Chief position as described. He said it would cost the City \$45,000.00 more per year to enact the proposal for the Chief Administrative position and the Police Chief position including benefits and dropping the officer position. Peterson asked if this proposal was budgeted for the coming year. Mayor Barlund-Maas stated she has to meet with Hanna regarding the budget. Huepenbecker stated that she believes Hanna has the Chief Administrative position and the Police Chief positions

budgeted. Mayor Barlund-Maas asked if the Chief Administrative position would remain certified to help the Police Chief if needed. Davis stated the Chief Administrative position would remain fully certified. Commissioner James Frohm asked for clarification regarding the \$45,000.00 being added to the amount that has already been budgeted for next year. Davis stated yes, that \$45,000.00 is in addition to the budgeted amount. Commissioner Don Walker asked when this new position would start. Davis stated it would be ideal to add this position as soon as possible. Walker asked Mayor Barlund-Maas if she had been part of the communications with the potential new Police Chief. Mayor Barlund-Maas stated she has not, but all that is being voted on this evening is to approve the Chief Administrative position which would then open the Police Chief position. Davis asked if the administrative position is approved tonight would the Police Department have to post the Police Chief position to the public or could they just interview and hire the potential Police Chief candidate? Walker asked if the City had to legally post the ad to the public. Mayor Barlund-Maas stated yes, that the City would have to advertise to the public. Huepenbecker asked for clarification that the Police Department would have to advertise and take applications for the Police Chief.

**MOTION** by Davis, supported by Walker, to adjust the structure in the Police Department to include a Chief Administrative Officer at \$29.00 per hour with benefits, a Police Chief at \$33.00 per hour with benefits, and no additional Officer at this time. Motion carried 7-0.

#### **G. Fire Department-Walton Township Contract – Action Item**

Walton Township provided a copy of the one-year Fire Contract to the Council. Fire Commissioner Walker informed the Council that the contract was increased to \$40,000.00 from \$25,000.00 for the Olivet Fire Department to provide fire and medical services for the additional 1/3 of northern Walton Township. Mayor Barlund-Maas asked what the \$75.00 per hour charge was referencing. Fire Chief Collins stated that the fee is for the Olivet Fire Department to return to the scene of a fire if requested. Chief Collins reiterates that in previous years the contract was two years, but this new contract is a one-year contract where evaluations and adjustments can be made on future contracts.

Huepenbecker said last year in budget talks there was a discussion with Hanna and Collins regarding adding an annual equipment charge in the township contracts. She asked when this would be included. Chief Collins said he did not talk to Walton Township about including the equipment fee in the contract. Mayor Barlund-Maas stated that Walton Township did say that they would set up a line item in their fund for equipment replacement. She said the fire contract for 2026 should include an equipment replacement fee. Walker stated that the Walton Township supervisor did discuss with him how they are setting aside funds for equipment. Walker also asked that grammatical errors be corrected in the contract.

**MOTION** by Walker, supported by Frohm, to agree to the one-year fire contract between the City of Olivet Fire Department and Walton Township that will begin using Walton Township's fiscal year of April 1, 2025. Motion carried 7-0.

#### **H. Fire Truck Purchase – Action Item**

Fire Chief Collins said he had met with the sales representative from Spencer at the fire station. Due to the time restraints, Collins was given estimated prices with a contingency for lettering, striping, mounting equipment, and safety features to make the truck our own. Chief Collins stated that he had spoken with Hanna regarding the approximate \$550,000.00 price of the truck which includes the contingency work. Mayor Barlund-Maas asked who the manufacturer is and what is the price of the truck that will replace truck #813. Collins stated Spencer is the manufacturer and the price without the contingency is \$496,750.00. He stated that with the contingency additions to the truck, the total would

be no more than \$550,000.00. Peterson asked what the plan was to finance this truck. Walker informed the Council that Hanna said there is \$300,000.00 set aside leaving \$200,000.00. Walker said he is not sure what Lee Township plans on contributing, but Walton Township will contribute \$30,000.00 for the fiscal year (FY) 2024-2025, \$30,000.00 in May for FY 2025-2026, and \$30,000.00 in May 2026 for the FY 2026-2027. Peterson asked if anyone had talked with Rural Development. Huepenbecker stated that she had and there are no grants at this time. Chief Collins stated that they would strip everything that could be used from the old truck and scrap the rest. He said Spencer Manufacturing is showing interest in the old truck, but negotiations have not started yet. Collins assured the Council that the truck would not exceed \$550,000.00. Discussion took place regarding the difference between the old truck versus the new truck and how it came about that the Fire Department found this demo truck.

**MOTION** by Walker, supported by Marsh, to move forward with the purchase of the demo truck from Spencer to replace truck #813 at a cost not to exceed \$550,000.00. Motion carried 7-0.

### **Approval of the Bills**

**MOTION** by Frohm, supported by Hoffdahl, to pay the bills with the three additional late bills. Motion carried 7-0.

### **Department Head Reports**

**Police Chief Shawn Garcia** – Garcia stated the Police Department has slowed down which made time for him to patrol and work on Lexipol policies. He said School Resource Officer (SRO) Marco Hernandez has been busy at the schools. Garcia thanked the committee and the Council for approving the new Chief Administrative position. He said he is looking forward to it.

**DPW Director Jerry Staggs** – Staggs stated that the DPW has been busy keeping up with the plowing, salting, and filling potholes. He said the DPW borrowed The University of Olivet's sidewalk salter due to the increased amount of ice everywhere. Staggs asked who was responsible for clearing the sidewalks. Peterson stated that at one time it was the City's responsibility to clear sidewalks. Walker stated he believes it's better to have the City be responsible for clearing the sidewalks making them safe as few residents keep their sidewalks clear. Mayor Barlund-Maas stated that ultimately, it's the resident's responsibility, but if the DPW could help that would be appreciated. Clearing the roads would be the priority before the sidewalks. Staggs agreed that the DPW would take on the responsibility of keeping the sidewalks clear and safe. Davis asked how long it would take to clear the City sidewalks. Staggs stated approximately three to four hours depending on how many times they have to stop to get more salt.

**Clerk/Treasurer Amy Huepenbecker** – Huepenbecker stated that the office has been busy with red tags and taking water and tax payments.

**Fire Chief John Collins** – Collins stated that the Fire Department had 23 calls for the month. He said that Lee Township is waiting for payment from the solar company to contribute to the truck purchase. Collins stated that the solar company plans to purchase a Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) for the Olivet Fire Department and a grass/medical truck. Collins informed the Council that he attended Coffee Hour with some area politicians at The University of Olivet, including State Senator Sarah Anthony. Anthony talked about Rural Development not having grants at this time. Collins invited the Council to visit the fire station on February 18<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. as Anthony asked to visit to see our needs first-hand. Collins thanked the Council for its support.

## **Commissioner Comments**

**Joe Hoffdahl** – Hoffdahl thanked all employees.

**Joseph Davis** – Davis stated that he had nothing to add.

**Don Walker** – Walker stated he had nothing to add.

**Larry Marsh** – Marsh stated he had nothing to add.

**Gary Peterson** – Peterson stated the recycling center has changed. He said Eaton County has placed the mobile recycling trailer on site and all the recyclables have to be sorted into bins. Peterson asked if this would be the new normal at the recycling site. Huepenbecker stated that she had spoken with Bellevue Village Manager Nicole Roberts regarding the recycling center and the mobile recycling trailer. Roberts informed Huepenbecker that the mobile trailer was there to help with all the overflow. Huepenbecker said the grant is only for an allotted amount of recycling. If they haul more than the allotted amount, the City splits the cost of the overage charges. The thought was to place the additional mobile recycling trailer that the County would haul away, therefore reducing the amount towards the allotted grant amount hauled away. Hopefully, this would reduce any overages and extra costs over the grant amount.

**James Frohm** – Frohm stated he had nothing to add.

**Laura Barlund-Maas** – Barlund-Maas stated she had nothing to add.

Council meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

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Laura Barlund-Maas, Mayor

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Amy Huepenbecker, Clerk/Treasurer