

**REGULAR PIQUA CITY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2023**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Piqua City Commission met at 6 p.m. at the Ft. Piqua Plaza in the Banquet Hall on the 4th floor located at 308 N. Main Street, Piqua, Ohio.

**ROLL CALL**

Mayor Pearson and Commissioners Hinds, Lee, Grissom, and Vetter were all present.

Mayor Pearson briefly reviewed the Rules of Conduct for Piqua City Commission Meetings.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of the minutes from the July 18, 2023, Regular City Commission Meeting

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinds to approve the Consent Agenda and Commissioner Lee seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion was carried unanimously.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**ORDINANCE NO. O-6-23 (3<sup>rd</sup> Reading)**

An ordinance to adopt Chapter 109: Rental Housing Regulations

Introduction: City Manager Paul Oberdorfer provided a brief timeline of events leading up to this ordinance. The original meeting and introduction of the Rental Inspection Program occurred in October 2021, with various discussions and meetings since that time. Recently, the Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on June 13, 2023, and recommended approval of this ordinance. There were also Public Hearings held at the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading on June 20, 2023, along with a 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading on July 18, 2023. Throughout the process, revisions have been made based on public comments and input.

Community and Economic Development Director Chris Schmiesing then shared a slide presentation on the proposed Rental Inspection Program. He noted that there has been a concern about the rental housing stock in Piqua since 2007. He showed data that 80% of Code Compliance issues have been resolved, as activity is happening for the exterior of properties. Rentals, however, account for 60% of those cases, and current compliance does not include the interior of properties. Mr. Schmiesing recounted that details of the Rental Inspection Program were provided at a Work Session on April 24, 2023, and then posted to the City's website page. There was also a Public Comment Period from April 25<sup>th</sup> until May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Mr. Schmiesing then summarized the revisions made to the program since the beginning. He also shared the Rental Inspection Checklist along with budget information to outline how the \$65 licensing fee was figured.

Commissioners Comments: Commissioner Grissom inquired about a start date, to which Mr. Schmiesing replied that the registration process and educational campaign would begin this October with a program start

date of January 2024. Those affected would be notified by letter. Commissioner Grissom also wanted to confirm that the \$65 fee was annual, not monthly. He also asked how the order will be determined for which properties to inspect first and wanted clarification on the notification process. Mr. Schmiesing explained that a scoring system similar to what the county uses would likely be used. The commissioner then asked what budget obstacles are anticipated for this new program. Mr. Schmiesing replied that it will be difficult to forecast with a brand-new program until a few years of data is gathered, but that he has anticipated uncollected fees. Commissioner Grissom then asked if there was any feedback gathered from other cities doing this program, to which Mr. Schmiesing said that this program certainly generates a positive outcome in other cities, but that it does require the right staffing and lots of work.

Commissioner Lee asked about personnel needed for the new program. Mr. Schmiesing responded that the City will need 2 full-time Inspectors and that a new third employee would be hired for other code compliance tasks. Commissioner Lee inquired if the code was in final form, to which Mr. Schmiesing said that the Law Director had approved it. Commissioner Lee also wanted to know if the City will be willing to work with property owners on improvements and repairs needed in a reasonable manner. Mr. Schmiesing said the City is happy to work with property owners for extra time and resources needed, but that health and safety issues will always be top priority.

Commissioner Hinds asked for clarification on how many employees this program would require. Mr. Schmiesing answered that there would be 2 full-time Inspectors and a third employee for other duties. Commissioner Hinds also asked about the equipment software budget, and Mr. Schmiesing replied that the City is currently looking for software specific to the licensing component of the Rental Inspection Program.

Mayor Pearson wanted to verify that this budget would be separate from the General Fund, to which Mr. Schmiesing replied yes.

Public Comment: Brandon Virgallito of 1111 Marwood Drive recommended tabling this ordinance, as he believes that the City is rushing through the process.

Paul Simmons at 215 McKinley Avenue stated that government overreach should never be a solution to any problem.

Kathy Sherman of 2325 White Tail Lane expressed her support for the program, as she experienced a decline in value of a previous house due to nearby rentals in poor condition.

Dave Humerickhouse at 1800 Amherst Avenue understands the need for this program, as he has dealt with both good and bad rentals the past 52 years.

Deron Yingst of 604 W. Greene Street stated his mistrust of the City to run this program and suggested it be tabled due to how vague it is currently.

Louis Jacomet at 425 S. Roosevelt Avenue believes that this would be a violation of the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Chuck Starrett of 4244 W. Demming Road stated that licensing is a control issue. He then read the Commissioner Oath of Office statement.

Jim Roth at 641 W. Ash Street said he is in favor of the ordinance, as he has been inside many rental properties with poor and unsafe living conditions.

Chet Osborne of 406 Staunton Street said that it is not always the landlords' responsibility for dilapidated properties.

Joe Wilson of 211 W. Greene Street expressed his approval for the ordinance, saying that the revisions are good and that it is not a large cost increase for tenants and landlords.

Cathleen Miller at 1514 Madison Avenue believes that this ordinance would be a violation of tenant rights.

Eva Silvers of 319 Third Street said that this program would be discrimination against renters.

Roland Sourmail at 660 South Street made unfavorable remarks regarding a city employee.

Kevin Lofton of Piqua Village Apartments located at 1345 Covington Avenue questioned why the City would need to do an inspection on HUD properties that already have regular inspections.

Tom Hohman at 1803 Nicklin Avenue wanted to know what percentage of the rental properties identified does the City anticipate being in violation of a code. Mr. Schmiesing replied that the City does not know at this time, and there would be an assessment period in the first year of the program.

Benjamin Fugate at 1413 Broadway stated that the power to license is the power to take away.

BJ Cooley of 1127 Anderson Street believes that this is all about the City making money.

Laura Bates of 508 Caldwell Street stated her position that the program does not protect private rights.

Paul Voorhis of 10779 Hardin Road said that there needs to be accountability of the staff, City Commissioners and City Manager.

Estela Martinez at 624 S. Wayne Street gave her opinion that there are both good and bad ideas in this program.

Jeff Grimes of 1314 Maplewood Drive expressed his concern that this ordinance is intrusive on good landlords and should be tabled until the policy is more concrete. He also commented that if it passes, the City will face a lawsuit.

Tonya Blair of Leading Stars Realty wanted to confirm that all 5 of the Commissioners had received information from the Ohio Realtors Association, to which they all did confirm.

Jim Cruse of 9618 N. County Road 25A believes that this program will lead to more homelessness in the area.

Robert Bim-merle of 8655 N. Fairview Road suggested that the City only perform these inspections if a renter reports a problem.

Lisa Brown said she owns rentals in Piqua and has concerns over the timeframe and cost to make improvements and needed repairs in houses.

Mayor Pearson read an email from Spencer Peltier of 601 Caldwell Street in full support of the program, as he feels that holding landlords to a standard is very important.

Commissioner Lee read an email from Greg Monte at 613 Broadway conveying his support, as the program assures tenants of safety and promotes the general well-being of the public.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grissom to table this ordinance and Commissioner Lee seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion was tabled unanimously.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **RESOLUTION NO. R-95-23**

A resolution for consent to accept Ohio Department of Development Grant for \$100,000 for Ridge Street water upgrades

Introduction: Utilities Director Kevin Krejny explained that this need was identified several years ago. The City has been awarded a Grant of \$100,000 from the Cares Act to assist in completion of this project. The total project will cost approximately \$240,000, with the water fund supporting the remainder after the grant money. Bids will begin early 2024, with completion the same year.

Commissioners Comments: Commissioner Vetter asked when the project will begin, to which Mr. Krejny replied January 2024.

Public Comment: None

A motion was made by Commissioner Lee to approve the resolution and Commissioner Vetter seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion was carried unanimously.

### **RESOLUTION NO. R-96-23**

A resolution adopting sewer fund balance guidelines

Introduction: Mr. Krejny said this resolution, along with the next two, involves establishing fund financial guidelines and formulas to manage the amount of cash reserves available for the water, sewer and stormwater funds. The City engaged the services of financial consultant Sawvel and Associates, Inc., and these new guidelines follow the existing model of the Power Department. Mr. Krejny said that the same methodology was implemented for all 3 funds, and that with these guidelines in place, there is an opportunity in the future to potentially lower utility rates. For the sewer fund, the balance would not go below \$7.6 million dollars.

Commissioners Comments: Commissioner Vetter asked if these guidelines are similar to the established guidelines of the Power Department, to which Mr. Krejny replied yes.

Public Comment: Gary Koenig of 5 Peregrine Place expressed concern with the very conservative timeframe of 12 months, as he feels the reserve timeframe should be 6 months.

Tom Hohman expressed his support for the fund balance guidelines as a member of the Utility Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Vetter to approve the resolution and Commissioner Lee seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried unanimously.

### **RESOLUTION NO. R-97-23**

A resolution adopting stormwater fund balance guidelines

Introduction: Mr. Krejny said that the fund balance for stormwater would not go below \$1.7 million dollars per the proposed guidelines. Currently there is no debt.

Commissioners Comments: Commissioner Lee asked if the stormwater rate will increase for customers, and Mr. Krejny responded that there is an increase of 3% for the next 2 years due to inflation.

Public Comment: Tom Hohman commented that current expenses may drop.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lee to approve the resolution and Mayor Pearson seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion was carried unanimously.

### **RESOLUTION NO. R-98-23**

A resolution adopting water fund balance guidelines

Introduction: Mr. Krejny reported that the fund balance for water would not go below \$8.5 million dollars per the proposed guidelines due to more infrastructure to maintain.

Commissioners Comments: None

Public Comment: None

A motion was made by Commissioner Vetter to approve the resolution and Commissioner Grissom seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion was carried unanimously.

### **RESOLUTION NO. R-99-23**

A resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into preliminary legislation with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) for the Looney Road Resurfacing Project

Introduction: Mr. Schmiesing explained that this resolution involves the resurfacing of Looney Road from County Road 25A to E. Ash Street and will consist of the milling and resurfacing of this roadway, along with new pavement markings. Funding of this project would include \$597K from STP, \$300K from OPWC, and the remainder would be local funds from the City and Miami County. This resolution would allow the City to proceed with ODOT on this project.

Commissioners Comments: None

Public Comment: None

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinds to approve the resolution and Commissioner Lee seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion was carried unanimously.

### **RESOLUTION NO. R-100-23**

A resolution to adopt a name for the newly constructed pedestrian bridge, currently referred to as "The Great Miami River Trail Bridge"

Introduction: City Planner Kyrsten French reported that 2 applications were received to name the new bridge: "Atomic City Bridge" proposed by the Community Diversity Committee and Gary Koenig and "The Goodrich Giles and Atomic City Bridge" proposed by Larry Hamilton. She said that based on public comment, the general public prefers the "Atomic City Bridge" name.

Commissioners Comments: Commissioner Lee commented that "Atomic City Bridge" was the option favored by the Community Diversity Committee but that a third option "Atomic City Bridge at Goodrich Giles Park" was also liked by the committee.

Public Comment: Tyler Fonzi, a member of the Community Diversity Committee, reiterated Commissioner Lee's statement about the third name option.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinds to amend the resolution to include this third name option and Commissioner Grissom seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion was carried unanimously.

A motion was then made by Commissioner Lee to approve the amended resolution and adopt the name "Atomic City Bridge at Goodrich Giles Park" and Mayor Pearson seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion was carried unanimously.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Melanie Walker at 526 N. Wayne Street thanked the City for their assistance, in particular the Police and Public Works departments, when a tree recently fell down on her property.

Tom Hohman commended the City for quickly removing a tree that fell down on the bike path recently. He appreciates that the path is kept clean.

Kyrsten French expressed her gratitude to the City for the opportunity to work as the City Planner the past 4 years. She said that she loves Piqua and plans to continue to be involved as a citizen.

## **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

Mr. Oberdorfer thanked Mayor Pearson for moving the meeting date so that he and others could participate in National Night Out. He was pleased with the turnout at Indian Ridge and said that the Alexanders did a wonderful job for that neighborhood.

## **COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS**

Mayor Pearson thanked both Mr. Oberdorfer and Mr. Schmiesing for their due diligence regarding the Rental Inspection Program. She suggested that the ordinance be voted on at the next meeting.

Commissioner Vetter acknowledged the recent anniversary celebration of St. James Episcopal Church.

Commissioner Lee said he was thankful for all of the citizen involvement at tonight's meeting. He would like for the City to collaborate with a panel of landlords to work on the Rental Inspection Program, and he said that revisions to the plan need to be highlighted.

Commissioner Hinds reminded everyone about the weekly Community Farmers Market on Thursdays downtown.

Commissioner Grissom said he appreciated everyone who came to the meeting this evening and agreed with Commissioner Lee that collaboration is needed for the Rental Inspection Program. He also thanked City staff for all of their work on this project.

**ADJOURNMENT** at 9:18 p.m.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lee to adjourn, and Commissioner Grissom seconded the motion. All approved and the motion was carried unanimously.

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CINDY PEARSON, MAYOR

PASSED: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
CLERK OF COMMISSION