

MINUTES OF THE POLO CITY COUNCIL TOWN HALL MEETING HELD IN THE POLO FIRE STATION, 208 S. FRANKLIN AVE., POLO, ILLINOIS, JULY 23, 2015.

INVOCATION:

Mayor Doug Knapp gave invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Knapp led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Knapp called the Town Hall meeting to order at 7:00p.m. on Thursday, July 23, 2015.

PRESENT: Alderman Phillip Peterson, Alderman Jim Busser, Alderman Troy Boothe, Alderperson Cheryl Galor and Alderman Randy Schoon. Also present was Mayor Doug Knapp and City Clerk Susie Corbitt.

ABSENT: Alderman David Ackeberg.

Mayor Knapp thanked everyone for attending this evening and stated this is the time to give everyone a chance to speak on either of these subjects of the grocery store or a fifth full time officer. Mayor Knapp went over the rules of order for this evening when speaking.

A. Public Input for Mr. Ahmad Farraj for the Community Interest in His Opening of a Grocery Store in Polo.

Mayor Knapp stated that Mr. Ahmad Farraj is present this evening and is interested in opening a grocery store in the old building that housed one before. Mr. Farraj is not so much asking for monetary assistance, but wants to know our feelings of a grocery store opened by him. Mayor Knapp explained what has been offered by the City of Polo in sales tax, with ten, fifteen and twenty years of rebates offered. When discussion was held on property tax rebate the EAV would not have changed that much, so that was not a viable tool to use. He went on to report 100% in sales taxes abatement in 10 years would be \$80,000.00, and that Mr. Farraj would not be selling alcohol and cigarettes.

Mayor Knapp stated he feels everyone would like to see a nice clean store with good meat and it would be a great addition to the city. Loans and other Federal and State assistance contacts have been given to Mr. Farrj to follow up on for possible financial assistance to him. Mr. Don Vock questioned looking at \$8,000 on an annual or yearly base and will the sales tax be coming into a special fund? City Clerk Corbitt stated the sales tax would be monitored by Jacobs and Associates yearly. The sales tax comes to the City of Polo monthly from the State of Illinois, but is not broke down as to where the taxes come in from the various businesses. Sales tax is deposited into the general fund accounts. If the City Council and Mr. Farraj did make an agreement then a check would be issued once a year. Part of the agreement between the City of Polo and Mr. Farraj would be to allow the City to see what sales tax is paid from the grocery store. This part of the agreement would be done between the City of Polo and the Illinois Department of Revenue.

Mr. Jared Monroe asked Mr. Farraj how many potential jobs would be generated. Mr. Farraj reported 20 employees and he will be open 6-10 daily and he plans on hiring local. He went on to say these jobs may work into full time if they are that busy.

Mr. Dick Butler questioned through all of this is there any type of revenue projections and how soon would the opening take place. He went on to say he drove by this evening and saw weeds growing up the building and along the parking area questioning if this is in violation of city codes. Mr. Farraj stated he would be opening on September 15th. His projection is between \$700,000.00 to \$900,000.00 in sales annually. Mr. Harold Folkers questioned what experience he has. Mr. Farraj replied that they have a grocery store in the Quad City and in Chicago since 1982. Ms. Diane Bishop reported she walks her dog every day; since this area is vacated there are rats running around and she wonders if this will be taken care of. This has happened twice on the grocery store property when she has been walking her dog. She questions if that will be addressed and with the last owner she did not shop there due to the conditions, but wants to shop there. Mr. Farraj replied that he has never seen rats.

Mr. Richard Jacks questioned after all these years how are you going to get people to purchase their groceries there. Donnie Vock and Mayor Knapp met with Mr. Farraj and questioned good products, competitive prices, etc. Mayor Knapp made the statement to those present this evening that this is your money, not this council's. Mr. Vock stated the thought behind this is to rebate the sales tax back that the city does is not currently receiving. This would be future earnings for the city and to use as an incentive. He went on to say we are not giving Polo money away, but giving money we do not currently receive. Discussion held on how the Polo Economic Development Corporation (PEDC) and City Council has worked to come up with possible incentives for Mr. Farraj. Mrs. Jesse Ross questioned if he is going to carry a wide variety of items and will you be comparable with the larger grocery stores along with who his supplier will be. Mr. Farraj replied in Davenport they use Central. Mike Faivre reported with the PEDC we spoke with many grocery lines and their ideas is to do what some of the larger stores do not and specialize in that. Mrs. Vickie Hunt was present who lives in an area where Mr. Farraj brought two properties and she questioned what kind of store you will have, she stated she is not impressed with the way they take care of their properties and questions the cleanliness.

Mrs. Louise Hall questioned if the PEDC has discussed how to encourage people to come and make their purchases. Mr. Don Vock stated at this point they have not, but there are many types of incentives that are possibilities. Alderman Randy Schoon stated there is not a person in this room who does not want a grocery store to open in Polo. Alderman Schoon stated he feels as Mrs. Hunt that Mr. Farraj properties look very tough and if this store turns out the same then it will fail, but please prove him wrong.

Alderman Troy Boothe stated it is safe to assume that Mr. Farraj needs to listen to everyone and do what they want in order to succeed. Mr. Joe Cleveland questioned does this grocery store opening depend on whether he gets money from the city. Mr. Farraj replied he would still open even if he does not get any financial assistance. Mayor Knapp stated maybe in the long run if he is successful that does not mean we cannot look at other avenues to assist. Mr. Ron McDermott thanked Mr. Farraj for coming tonight stating the success of that store in your hands.

B. Public Input for Adding an Additional 5th Full Time Police Officer for the Polo Police Department.

Mayor Knapp reported that Alderman Troy Boothe is Chairman of the Police Department, with Alderman Jim Busser as second Chair on that committee. At this time Alderman Boothe reported the City approached Kurt Cavanaugh who did an independent analyze of the Police department. Our Chief does very little administrative but does mostly patrolling.

He would like a 5th officer so the Chief can do more administrative duties. Mr. Cavanaugh recommends gives the Chief more time for administrative duties including developing procedures, reviewing cases, reports, and evidence, meeting with officers individually and providing training.

Mr. Larry Weaver questioned how many other municipalities have five full time officers. Alderman Boothe stated this is based on various different things. Would there be a reduction in part time police we cannot answer this at this time. Special events would still use part time officer. These part time guys have full time position elsewhere. Alderman Schoon stated the schools like to see our police their everyday and in a drop in a hat we could have a tragedy. Alderman Schoon stated he has had numerous ideas from the citizens as to scheduling with the current staff. He also stated some of our officers need to be held accountable for their time a little more. City Clerk Corbitt called several towns; Amboy with a population of 2,500 has 4 full time officers, Mt. Carroll with a population of 1,700 has 3 full time officers and Mt. Morris with a population of 3,100 has 4 full time officers.

The question of cost came up for an additional full time officer; at \$18 an hour with all the benefits the cost would be over \$64,838.00 the first year. The IMRF pension and social security costs are on the property taxes which will have to be addresses and increased when the tax levy is adopted this year if an additional full time officer is hired.

Alderman Boothe stated all it is going to take is one bad situations and one thing that is what Mr. Cavanaugh said is that it could put the city at a legal disadvantage and the police department in a bad light. Mrs. Mindy Ditzler questioned when you come in and pay other's to fill in what would the difference be. Alderman Boothe stated if it is all about cost then he cannot guarantee more revenues would come in. Mrs. Louise Hall questioned if implemented would the Chief be on call. Alderman Boothe replied no he is on call regardless as it is now. Mrs. Jesse Ross stated if the police need a full time officer then hire one. Alderman Boothe stated we are not saying we have to do this right now, but it would benefit the citizens. Mr. Brett Faber stated any business knows that when men push themselves it becomes very difficult to perform top level. These officers work twelve hour shifts with working five days one week and then only two the next.

Mrs. Ditzler questioned if we are comparable with other small town, and do they lock up their offices. Chief Christen replied currently there is only one officer on duty at a time, but if he was full time he could be more available at the office.

Mr. Tim Merrell stated it sounds like the only bad thing is the revenues, and can we support this in ten years, but he would like to see the Chief full time and more in the school and so the kids can see the cops as good guys and asked do we have the revenues to support this. Alderman Boothe stated we do not know those answers and everyone would have to pay for this. Polo Community Scholl Superintendent Chris Rademacher reported four years ago a law passed that police have to come into the schools and do drills, but they have Mr. Cavanaugh who is a retired State Trooper. In the last two years when an officer comes in he will also make a safety call at their homes which is good and bad, but feels this is extremely positive. The Polo Police also monitor the bus radios which is extremely positive. They have had very good feedback from the police. In November they had an evacuation plan practice with all the city workers involved in this exercise. Sergeant Shawn Knight assisted the schools with writing a grant where they received \$18,000.00 for cameras and such. Discussion was held on the importance of the police presence in the schools. Mr. Mike Faivre asked if we would need to wait to the next fiscal year to implement this. Alderman Boothe replied we have not gotten that far. Dee Mumford

questioned has anyone looked at scheduling a part timer instead of hiring a fifth full time person. Alderman Boothe replied this can become a scheduling night mare, but if we have to do this with part time we would try to do so. Mrs. Jesse Ross questioned if we get a full time officer will the patrolling stay the same. Alderman Boothe stated the chief will alter his shift so he can work nights along with days. Part time officer currently make \$20 an hour and there are four full time officers who work 12 hour shifts, and work every other weekend, but the Chief would be able to fill in and then do administration and training.

Mayor Knapp thanked everyone for coming this evening.

Alderman Jim Busser made a motion to adjourn the City Council Town Hall meeting at 8:15p.m., seconded by Alderman Phillip Peterson. Ayes 6, Nays 0. The motion carried by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susie Corbitt, MMC