

MEETING MINUTES OF ST. MARYS CITY COUNCIL

PRESIDING OFFICER:
James J. Harris
Council President

March 24, 2025
6:30 p.m.
Council Chambers

ROLL CALL: Bubp, Lunz, Christman, Childrey, Fitzgerald, Uhlenhake, Aquaro

Moved by Mr. Bubp, seconded by Mr. Christman, to accept the Minutes of the March 10, 2025, meeting. By show of hands, motion passed unanimously.

PETITIONS & COMMUNICATIONS:

Elizabeth Osborne, Ohio State University in Lima and the Mental Health & Recovery Board in Auglaize and Hardin County to let everyone know that May is Mental Health Awareness month. They will be holding an event on May 19th from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at K.C. Geiger Park for a mental health scavenger hunt. Multiple service agencies will be at the event providing information of the services they provide. Mr. Foxhoven said the administration is supportive of this event.

Erin Buchanan addressed Council saying she has been approached from residents with some questions/concerns.

Citizens are asking about their electric bills that were significantly higher in January and February. They are asking the City to look into this to see what might have caused these fluctuations. They would also like the City to be more transparent on how their rates are determined to help better understand their bills. Erin also said residents are questioning if they are indirectly paying for the new City building. Again, more transparency would be beneficial.

Mr. Foxhoven suggested residents concerned about their electric bill contact the Electric department. Residents can reach out to the Utility Office Supervisor or the Electric Department. They can review their bill with them. We are also not opposed to going to their house to see if suggestions can be made.

Mr. Foxhoven also addressed the City building. The building was funded through bonds which is a long-term loan. It is being paid back by 80% through the general fund; the remaining 20% is being split among the four utilities. This process has been done through our bond counsel, the finance attorney we work with Squire Patton Boggs. Mr. Foxhoven believed the split was 5% water, 5% sewer, 7% electric and 3% solid waste. A rate study was conducted by Courtney & Associates he believed in 2015 to make sure we are recovering our costs to provide this service to customers. Prior to that our electric rates had not been raised in over 34 years. We are currently meeting the revenue requirements for the electric fund. If residents are concerned about transparency, they can submit a public record request and we will provide the information.

Some citizens are expressing concerns about City owned public restrooms becoming gender neutral. She asked if there are any plans or discussions about changing the current restrooms to become gender neutral, specifically at K.C. Geiger Park.

Mr. Foxhoven said he was not aware of any plans to make restrooms gender neutral. They are currently designated male and female. Mr. Bubp commented it would be a significant cost to change current individual restrooms to be gender neutral.

Residents continue to report that soot from the Foundry is getting on their vehicles and houses causing damage and there are concerns about health risks. Has the City taken any steps to address these environment concerns and are there any discussions with the Foundry regarding accountability or restitution efforts. Does the City know if the Foundry is meeting all EPA regulations; if not, is the City willing to look into this.

Mr. Foxhoven said the Foundry is audited all of the time and we do have conversations with them. We looked into it when we initially received some complaints. The Foundry had taken appropriate steps to deal with it. To his knowledge there hasn't been an issue since that time. In his conversations

Mr. Harris noted a portion of the electric bill is determined by our peak usage. January and February were cold and there was a lot of electric used. Mr. Foxhoven also said there are a lot of factors that are taken into consideration. We can't control transmission costs. He recommended those with concerns contact Mack Kuenning or Angie Youngs and they can review their bills with them.

Mr. Christman noted on the City's website under the Utilities section there is a link to an organization called Efficiency Smart. There are tools to help identify appliances that may be using higher amounts of energy. Mr. Bubp also encouraged residents to contact Efficiency Smart. Mr. Foxhoven said periodically Efficiency Smart will offer special programs to get rid of old appliances that have higher electric usage. Those options and programs are out there that residents can take advantage of. Mr. Aquaro also noted that budget billing option is available with Mr. Foxhoven stating there are also multiple assistance programs available. The Utility Office can provide this information to residents.

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICIALS COMMITTEES ETC.:

The Auditor's Report was presented.

The Treasurer's Report was presented.

The Director of Public Service and Safety's Report was presented.

Mr. Foxhoven added that a fundraiser for SMART will be held on Thursday, April 3rd at JT's to help support the events they provide.

Mayor Hurlburt reminded everyone this is the last week for spring cleanup. The roll-offs at the Wastewater Treatment Plant will be available through Friday this week from noon to 5:00 p.m. and on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to noon. This has seemed to be very well received.

Mayor Hurlburt also wanted to let everyone know the one-half percent renewal levy campaign will be gearing up. There will be signs placed throughout the City.

Ms. Childrey asked if there were any updates regarding the Fort Barbee situation. Zach Ferrall said they are still waiting on the courts for a ruling. There are a lot of parties involved in this and he will let Council know when he knows more. Mr. Foxhoven commented there are some people interested in the building. Ms. Childrey asked if the management there is aware of this. She was informed they are.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no committee meetings to report.

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS:

Ordinance No. 2025-10 was presented to Council for a third reading.

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-10 – An Emergency Ordinance Authorizing the Execution of an Agreement With Clemans, Nelson & Associates, Inc. for Employee Relations Work

Moved by Mr. Bubp, seconded by Mr. Lunz, to pass Ordinance No. 2025-10 as an emergency. By show of hands, motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance No. 2025-11 was presented to Council for a first reading.

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-11 – An Ordinance Amending Section 955.09 (a) of the Codified Ordinances of the City of St. Marys Relating to Summerfest Beer Sales

Moved by Mr. Aquaro, seconded by Mr. Uhlenhake, to read Ordinance No. 2025-11. By show of hands, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Foxhoven said this ordinance will allow us to expand the northern boundary for the liquor permit during SummerFest. Right now, the northern boundary is extended to South Street. We would like to expand this to Spring Street so that it will include the back of the theater for outdoor events. The west boundary will remain at Front Street, the south boundary the railroad tracks, and the east boundary is the river.

informed the theater stage will replace the small stage during SummerFest. Ms. Tangeman also commented it takes the State awhile to approve the liquor permit and asked this to be passed under suspension of the rules. Mr. Foxhoven noted this ordinance is not an emergency, but after it is passed they still have to wait 30 days unless emergency language is added. Ms. Tangeman said if this is passed, she can still have time to apply for the permit at the end of April.

Moved by Mr. Bubp , seconded by Mr. Aquaro, to suspend the rules Ordinance No. 2025-11. By show of hands, motion passed unanimously.

Moved by Mr. Fitzgerald, seconded by Mr. Christman to pass Ordinance No. 2025-11. By show of hands, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bubp asked if SMORA is still in effect on Friday of SummerFest. He was informed that SMORA rules state it is not in effect during SummerFest.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

Mr. Harris reminded elected officials their Ethics filing is coming due if they have not done so.

Moved by Ms. Childrey, seconded by Mr. Lunz, to go into Executive Session to discuss *Property Acquisition*. By show of hands, motion passed unanimously.

It was noted there would be no action taken after the meeting.

Council went into Executive Session at 6:56 p.m.

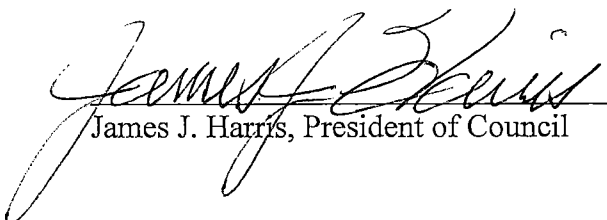
Moved by Mr. Fitzgerald, seconded by Mr. Uhlenhake to return to Regular Session. By show of hands, motion passed unanimously.

Returned to Regular Session at 7:17 p.m.

Moved by Mr. Bubp, seconded by Mr. Christman, to adjourn the meeting. By show of hands, motion passed unanimously.

Council adjourned at 7:18 p.m.


Debra Kable, Clerk of Council


James J. Harris, President of Council