

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
REYNOLDSBURG CITY COUNCIL
AUGUST 21, 2006

President of Council William L. Hills called the special meeting to order at 8:10 p.m.

Members of Council present: Brett Baxter, Doug Joseph, Mel Clemens, Antoinette Newman, Donna Shirey, Ron Stake, Preston Stearns.

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTIONS 191.02, 191.04 AND 191.07 AND ADOPT SECTION 191.191 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF REYNOLDSBURG, OHIO, IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE CITY INCOME TAX BY ONE-HALF PERCENT (0.5%) FROM THE CURRENT RATE OF ONE AND ONE-HALF PERCENT (1.5%) TO A RATE OF TWO PERCENT (2.0%), BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2007, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING FUNDS TO PAY GENERAL OPERATING COSTS OF THE CITY'S DIVISION OF POLICE, AND TO PAY COSTS OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS APPROVED BY THE CITY AFTER DECEMBER 31, 2006, INCLUDING THE PAYMENT OF DEBT SERVICE CHARGES ON SECURITIES ISSUED TO PAY COSTS OF THOSE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY- - Clerk read ordinance by title for the first time. Item referred to Finance Committee.

A RESOLUTION DECLARING THE NECESSITY OF AN ELECTION ON THE QUESTION OF APPROVING THE PASSAGE OF AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTIONS 191.02, 191.04 AND 191.07 AND ADOPT SECTION 191.191 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF REYNOLDSBURG, OHIO, IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE CITY INCOME TAX BY ONE-HALF PERCENT (0.5%) FROM THE CURRENT RATE OF ONE AND ONE-HALF PERCENT (1.5%) TO A RATE OF TWO PERCENT (2.0%), BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2007, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING FUNDS TO PAY GENERAL OPERATING COSTS OF THE CITY'S DIVISION OF POLICE, AND TO PAY COSTS OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS APPROVED BY THE CITY AFTER DECEMBER 31, 2006, INCLUDING THE PAYMENT OF DEBT SERVICE CHARGES ON SECURITIES ISSUED TO PAY COSTS OF THOSE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, REPEALING RESOLUTION NO. 40-06, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY- - Clerk read resolution by title for the one required reading. Mr. Stake moved adoption. Mr. Clemens seconded. Mr. Hills stated that he has a speaker slip on the item: Mrs. Curnutte.

Mrs. Curnutte: Thank you, President Hills, Mayor, Council. I did attend two of the public meetings. I did, tried to do some extensive research on the issue. Auditor Harris was very gracious at giving me additional information. And I tried to make as much of that information known to our group. Our Civic Association is the Reynoldsburg Concerned Citizens. We have about 350 members, and when I learned that it was going to go back on the ballot, I asked by e-mail, for opinions; and I had about 98, 99 responses...close to 100. Three responses were in favor of re-doing the ballot. Interestingly, those three people all live and work in Reynoldsburg. And their reason was that they did not want to take a chance on not having enough police protection. The other 97 comments were essentially along the lines of what I brought up for the good of the order at the public meeting. There is a perception that, and I believe Mr. Baxter

alluded to it, that at a time when the city was aware that we needed more police, more cruisers, more road maintenance, that the city chose not to put those into the budget, but rather to do a version of street scape that would preclude focusing on the police and the roads. And in offense, people are saying, we don't believe that we're going to get necessarily more police in the neighborhood, or that we're really going to get more roads. We haven't seen the city follow through on what it's told us in the past. It's a bit like my taking a very expensive vacation and then going back to my family and friends and saying, oh my gosh, they're going to turn off my electricity. You've got to give me some money, and so I think the points Mr. Eller brought up, people are not convinced that, and again, I'm not saying this in a negative way, I think that it's important to understand that people will predict future behavior based on past performance and so it's very important that people be convinced. And as Mr. Gratz said, that the people, the peoples will, will be listened to. The organization chart for the city has the people up here, and then it goes to the Mayor, and then it goes to the Council, and at least that is what I have been hearing. So if you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer.

Mr. Hills: I thank you for your comments on that. I would note, and then Mr. Stake, I would note as I noted earlier, come visit in September and October and you will see the effects of the last election, and as the Mayor has clearly said, this city was moving forward with the decision of that elected, and they will move forward and not back up from it. And that's clear and simple. And it will become evident real quick. Mr. Stake.

Mr. Stake: Thank you, President Hills. I'm just curious. Mrs. Curnutte, you said that the city didn't follow through with what they promised. Can you give me an example?

Mrs. Curnutte: One example is the example I gave at the public meeting. The landscape maintenance for street scape was proposed to be maintained at no additional cost for the city. That it would be maintained by the existing city staff. We are now...

Mr. Stake: I've got to stop you there. Because I don't recall that. And maybe I wasn't, I wasn't here for the Main Street Revitalization part where they drew up the plans and planned all that. I was here, I think just after Phase I got funded. So I'm not familiar with that I guess. Can anybody else here help me?

Mrs. Curnutte: Well there are people in the city who have a longer memory.

Mr. Stake: Well, I wasn't on Council at that time. So President Hills, you were here. Do you recall?

Mr. Hills: I can't say that when it went out for bid, if we were aware of who was going to be maintaining. We were constructing it, and there may have been an assumption that it would be done by city services; but I also know that to have done that, there would have to have been an increase in city services. And if you go back and look, we haven't increased city services. We haven't increased city services and employees because we don't have the money to do it. So it's a catch 22.

Mrs. Curnutte: We have a contract. I believe we have a contract for an outside service.

Mr. Hills: I believe the contract was entered into because the contract could be entered into for the period of time at less than it would cost to hire the people to do it. It was the lesser of two evils.

Mrs. Curnutte: I'm not arguing that. You asked for an example. I'm just giving you an example.

Mr. Stake: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Hills: Anything else for Mrs. Curnutte? (No response). Thank you.

Second speaker slip I have is Don Hallows.

Mr. Hallows: Good evening Councilmen, ladies, Mr. Mayor. I think most of you probably are aware that I was actively opposed to the tax and its initial balloting in August. I want to explain that I'm not opposed to the increase in services. What I was opposed to, and what I think a lot of citizens were opposed to, is the manner in which it was done in the communication between Council and the public effort that was made. But what I heard was, 80% - 20%. I am that 20%. And so I'm sitting here thinking, that someone that has lived in Reynoldsburg for 18 years that has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to the tax base, is now the target of an additional tax. And by golly, that hits home. I have many employees that work here. And I'd like to think that it's not important to them, but it was, and so I look at that argument and it's not, we need the tax for this reason, this reason, which are very valid to increase the Police Department. By golly, I'm for that. By golly, I'm for better roads too. Because it does increase property values. But the argument that was most impacted on me was that you said that 80% of you aren't going to have to pay it. So screw me because I've lived here for 18 years. I didn't care for that.

Now the other thing was the special election. An issue that, when was the last time an income tax was on the Reynoldsburg ballot? Many, many, many years ago. And you go and you put it on a special election for gosh sakes. A political ploy. That's exactly what it smelled like. A low turn out, it'll pass, and I objected to that. Not because I was opposed to what you're trying to do, but because of the way you tried to do it. A decision like this that's going to impact on all of us should be decided by as many voters as possible. And therefore, it is appropriate to put it on the November election. When November rolls around, I suspect that I'm going to have a sign up that says, vote yes, because the procedures are right. That's the way to do it.

Now, I'd like to make one other comment. There was a decidedly selective enforcement by the Safety Department against my efforts to oppose the election. I had constant problems with the sign department for illegal signs. They disappeared. Interestingly, during the last election, there were many illegal signs. Four by eight sheets of plywood were put up and those were never taken down, but my signs that I posted at two locations were taken down and removed. The Safety Director contacted people that had signs in place opposing it, saying, did you give permission to have those signs put in your yard? Stop and think about that for a second. How intimidating is that to have the city's Safety Director calling you, asking you, did you get permission for that sign? I was dumbfounded. So when the November election comes around, I presume that we will not have phone calls going out to everybody that puts out political signs. So the selective enforcement, aside from the fact that every citizen should have a right to express their opinion, the selective enforcement is something, that as a citizen that cares about Reynoldsburg, and cares about the principles of this country, and the right to express dissent, that issue actually bothers me more than anything else. And I hope that that's a concern to everyone that's in this

auditorium as well as everybody sitting here at Council, and the Mayor. But nonetheless, I suspect that I will support it, but I wanted everyone to know, that the methodology and the approach alienated a lot of citizens, it alienated a lot of people in our community, our Homeowners Association, and that putting it on the general ballot I think, and unfortunately phrasing it much like the Mayor suggested, it probably would have helped with the passage, and I hope it good luck in November.

Mr. Hills: Thank you, Mr. Hallowses.

Mr. Baxter: President Hills, if I could address that for you real quickly. Because I felt the same way you did as well. But I'll stand upon the reason why we did it the way we did, and maybe you'll understand if I give you an example why. Because I like you, felt the exact same way you did but on a different issue. I being a smoker, was prevented from smoking any longer in Columbus. And why? The entire electorate was given the opportunity to vote on it. I wasn't allowed to vote on that. I lived in Reynoldsburg. But yet the entire electorate of which the majority of those are non-smokers, got to make a decision on those who are smokers. In this case here, I thought it was a better opportunity to let those people who are concerned about this particular issue, to vote either direction. Just go vote. Thereby, having an accurate understanding of feeling for what those people charged for against, to vote for. That's the reason I went in that direction. So I want to make sure and understand, I could see where you would think it smells. But look at it from the other direction. It smelled for your benefit. Not for your detriment. At least in my mind. That's why I voted for that section of it.

Now the other side of the issue that you ran into with the signs, that smells to me and I don't approve of that whatsoever, you have a right to express your opinion for or against on any type of issues as long as you abide by the laws of the City of Reynoldsburg _____ signs or to be placed. Political or non-political. And that's my opinion. Thank you.

Mr. Hills: Mr. Clemens.

Mr. Clemens: I can understand Don, you have reasonings and so forth of what was happening and possibly how we do it. I do want to make it plain to you, and I'm a big _____ over this. If a sign is illegal, it's illegal. Whether they picked on you or whether they didn't, you had a 4 x 8 sign there, that's illegal. I don't know of any, the last election, and I've been around a long time and I hunt signs down, I guarantee that, I don't know of any 4 x 8 plywood signs that were up.

Mr. Hallowses: On Rosehill.

Mr. Clemens: You tell me who they were and what sign it was. Some of Rosehill that's on the other side of the street is not Reynoldsburg.

Mr. Hallowses: It was at the Reynoldsburg side. It was there blocking the intersection. I registered a complaint about the fact that it was blocking the intersection.

Mr. Clemens: And you should have complained.

Mr. Hallowses: Only because I almost got hit.

Mr. Clemens: Well, you should have complained, just like your sign is illegal, and they should have complained, and they should have told you to take it down.

Mr. Hallows: And we rented it.

Mr. Clemens: That's fine. I don't agree any further than that because you were illegal and I'm not going to argue about it.

Mr. Hallows: But the Safety Director calling people that had signs that were legal and asking if they had placement...

Mr. Clemens: I agree with you. That should not have been done. I'm talking about the illegal sign. You had it up. I had seen it. It was illegal. That's it. Period.

Mr. Hallows: And it was corrected.

Mr. Clemens: It was corrected and you did correct that.

Mr. Hills: Mr. Stake.

Mr. Stake: Thank you, President Hills. Mr. Hallows, I'm happy to hear that you'll support it in November. At least you're leaning that way. And I do want to apologize for the perception that was created. Because you're not the first person that told me that. I can tell you sincerely, that was not my intention. There were no tricks or political games being played. I was hopeful that it would have, this issue would have a single focus on August 8 and people would come out and understand it and support it. But that was not my intention to play any political games. And I apologize for the perception that was created.

Mr. Hallows: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate that comment.

Mr. Clemens: I don't think it was anybody's.

Mr. Stake: I can only speak for myself but I don't think anybody else _____.

Mr. Clemens: We wanted the single issue on the ballot. It was that simple. We didn't want to be in competition.

Mr. Hills: Obviously, _____ didn't understand that as well as we did. There isn't any doubt about that.

Mr. Hallows: That's true. It's a matter of perception. And some times from that side of the counter as you call it, you lose that focus. And you have so much material you're trying to absorb. I hope when we go forward that the communication will somehow be more effective.

Mr. Hills: I encourage everyone that's here tonight to continue in as you begin the communication

in September. Mrs. Newman.

Mrs. Newman: Well I just wanted to say, I don't see anything wrong with the Safety Director calling the homeowner and asking if they had been given permission to have those signs put up. I would think that would be proper procedure. Can anybody tell me?

Mr. Hills: Well, I'll defer that to the Mayor and let the Mayor respond to that.

Mrs. Newman: No. Somebody tell me why that's wrong?

Mr. Hallows: Because that reminds me of communist Russia. Do you think the state can intimidate people expressing political...

Mrs. Newman: That's not at all what was intended I'm sure. I'm sure she wanted to be sure that the sign...

Mr. Hallows: (Inaudible).

Mayor McPherson: Mr. Hallows, if I may. I can assure you that that will not happen again regardless of whether your sign's for or against. And I apologize. That individual works directly for me and that is not how we do business here. We don't call people up and ask them if they've given permission to put a sign up. Nor will we in the future.

Mr. Hallows: (Inaudible. Speaking off mike).

Mr. Hills: Any other questions of Mr. Hallows? (No response). If not, I do have two other speaker slips. Tom Gratz. Mr. Gratz.

Mr. Gratz: Do you need my address again?

Mr. Hills: If you'd like to. It's Palmer Road.

Mr. Gratz: It's Palmer Road. Yeah. First of all, let me say that this is totally self-serving. But I kind of think that there ought to be some sort of perks for actually living and working in Reynoldsburg. And I just had this idea, and even if you guys all agree to it, that it's probably too late and couldn't be done. But you could have had almost total support for this without raising any taxes, and get almost all the money, not all of it, but almost all of the money, by raising the taxes to 2%, and giving those residents who work here ½% credit. It's probably too late even if you did agree with it. But I just thought I'd mention that. Thank you.

Mr. Hills: Thank you, Mr. Gratz. The last speaker I have is Brandon Wright. Mr. Wright.

Mr. Wright: Hello Council. I just want to address two issues here. I think everybody's passionate on the issue. Whether you're for it or against it, it's very welcome. And I guess I'm glad to see a lot more people here at the Council meeting. I think the first thing of where probably it failed, was there were a lot of ill-informed people. And I just think that next time when you put

this on the ballot, if that's where you're going, to make sure that there's a focus to educate people on what the issue really is, what they're really voting for. And part of that would probably be the ballot language. It seems a little complex. And I know that if I were an average person and really not into politics, I would probably be very confused on the actual language of the ballot. So I would say if there's any way that you can simplify that to make it really what you want people to vote for, that would probably be good, as well as educating them on the issue. And I think that, like this lady said here, perception is everything. So if you can educate them, then they'll probably go your way with this.

Mr. Hills: Thank you, Mr. Wright. Any questions of Mr. Wright? Mr. Baxter.

Mr. Baxter: I would like to address that comment you made. And I disagree with you whole heartedly. I don't believe our citizens weren't educated. I truly believe they understood what we were trying to do. Just felt it was distasteful. How it was presented. When it was presented, and the way it was presented to them. We tried the best, from this side of the table, to make the best decisions we can. I will stand up first thing, I think we made a mistake. We more than likely should have come and done this in November. Given the time and experience, I won't make that mistake again. But I think I made a mistake by voting for that. Not because it was the right thing to do. Because it was. But because it was perceived as the wrong thing.

Mr. Wright: I think part of that is, if the people were educated that, this is going for safety, this is going for service, this is going to secure that we're in lock step with the rest of Franklin County, with the way that they do taxes, they would have been educated enough to probably vote for it. And I think that when I stood up and I said that give it enough time, put it on the November ballot, it would probably do the people well because you would have more time to educate them. I think that was reason. Now we've wasted \$25,000. And the only thing that I'm asking is, just educate the people. And I think that if they're educated, then they'll vote for you. I think the main reason of why they voted against it was because you saw it as a tax and they weren't really informed on what the whole tax was about, or what the whole idea that you guys were presenting, was truly about. I'm not saying that it's a bad idea. I'm just saying that, yes, the way that it was presented to the people, it seemed kind of shady. So next time, just educate them. Tell them where you want to go. This is what we want to do with the funds. Look, we're responsible and this is how we're going to do it. That's all that I'm saying on that.

Mr. Hills: Mr. Clemens.

Mr. Clemens: I can only say one thing. If people weren't educated - it was only in the paper month, after month, after month. And we got great representation from the three newspapers, and The Columbus Dispatch. You couldn't ask for any more. Now whether the people read the papers or not, I don't know. But I do know that we got everything we asked. It was explained in detail by the Mayor, by Council members, by the Auditor, week after week.

Mr. Wright: But the whole thing is, and the big thing that I would probably say that would, if you looked at the paper, there was a political ad where there was a cartoon where it firmly gave a negative connotation for the tax. And it might have been in the paper week, after week, after week, but I can certainly say that I didn't see anybody out on our streets saying, vote for this

because this is what it's going to do. So when I say not educated, not in the sense that they didn't go to school. But in the sense that they didn't have the knowledge to vote educationally on the ballot issue. So I just want to make sure that there's a clear clarification there. Not that I'm saying that the citizens are uneducated. I'm saying that they didn't have the knowledge. That's probably the better way to say it. They didn't have the knowledge of what they were voting on. So of course, what are they going to do? Who wants to vote on taxes? No one. So they're going to vote against it. Just make them more aware of exactly where their money's going for and make yourself a presence out there so they know. And that was it.

Mr. Hills: Okay. Thank you for your comments. I would note that we do have a motion by Mr. Stake. A second by Mr. Clemens. Does anyone on Council have any further comments? (No response). The only thing that I would note, and I'll repeat for some people that were late coming in, we are here tonight in a special meeting for the purpose that if this is going to the ballot in November, the county and state require that the Board of Elections be informed formally by resolution that we plan to do this, by this Thursday. Now, I've heard a lot of people say, let's go educate. Well I don't want anybody to misunderstand, we're not just sending this without education. We would like any volunteers to help us educate the public. But this is a need tonight to pass this resolution. It will take a vote of at least 5 of the Council members. It must be passed as an emergency because it must be there Thursday. So I'm hoping nobody misunderstands why we're here tonight. We're going to have to educate from the fact forward. This allows everybody to _____ that it appear on the ballot in the November election. We'd be more than happy to have all of the help and support when it gets there (Tape Change).

With the roll called, members voted: Mr. Baxter "Yea"; Mr. Joseph "Nay"; Mr. Clemens "Yea"; Mrs. Newman "Yea"; Mrs. Shirey "Nay"; Mr. Stake "Yea"; Mr. Stearns "Yea". Motion passed. Resolution No. 63-06 adopted.

Mr. Hills said there was a request from the Mayor for an Executive Session to discuss employment and dismissal of public employees. Mr. Hills said those attending would be elected officials, the Clerk, and Mayor's secretary. Mr. Stake moved to recess for Executive Session. Mr. Baxter seconded. With the roll called, members voted: Mr. Baxter "Yea"; Mr. Joseph "Yea"; Mr. Clemens "Yea"; Mrs. Newman "Yea"; Mrs. Shirey "Yea"; Mr. Stake "Yea"; Mr. Stearns "Yea". Mr. Hills said following the Executive Session, Council would reconvene only to call the roll and adjourn. Council recessed at 8:39 p.m.

Council reconvened at 9:40 p.m. With the roll called, members responding were: Mr. Baxter "Present"; Mr. Joseph "Present"; Mrs. Newman "Present"; Mrs. Shirey "Present"; Mr. Stake "Present"; Mr. Stearns "Present".

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

William L. Hills, President of Council

Nancy C. Frazier, Clerk of Council
(Minutes compiled/S. Smith, Ass't. Clk. of Council)