

City of Corunna
Regular Council Meeting
Tuesday, January 18, 2000

Present: Billis, Bayless, Bendall, Dumond, Hornus, Ockerman, Runyan.

Absent: None.

Guests: Tim Crawford, Superintendent of Public Works; Don Runyon; Linda Lawson; Millie Taute; Judy Horton; Bob Striggow; Gary & Shirley Schooley; Gene & Pat Sanderson; Dick Sanderson; Clark Long; David & Sandi Wenzlick; Jerry Ernst, The Flint Journal; Jackie Leone, The Argus Press; Shauna Bayless; Jan Scott; Stephanie Wuttke, The Independent; Officer Paul Richardson, Police Department; Keith & Diane Johnson; Larry Sanderson; Bill & Nancy Runyan; Steve Corey; Dick Miller; Karen Hornus; and other concerned citizens.

The meeting was called to order in the City Council Chambers by Mayor Billis at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS REGULAR MEETING: Ockerman moved, Hornus seconded to approve the minutes of the previous regular meeting as presented.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Ockerman, Dumond, Hornus, Runyan, Bayless, Bendall.

No: None.

Motion CARRIED

AGENDA APPROVAL: Hornus moved, Ockerman seconded to approve the agenda as presented with the addition of Item No. 4) Discuss Letter from Councilperson Bayless. Councilperson Ockerman stated it should be noted for the record that the city manager should be in attendance according to the city charter, but she was not in attendance because she is taking college classes.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Bayless, Runyan, Bendall, Ockerman, Dumond, Hornus.

No: None.

Motion CARRIED

APPROVAL OF VENDOR DISBURSEMENTS: Hornus moved, Dumond seconded to approve the vendor disbursements as presented.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Runyan, Ockerman, Bayless, Hornus, Bendall, Dumond.

No: None.

Motion CARRIED

CALL TO AUDIENCE: Mayor Billis asked council if they had established a Sergeant at Arms. Councilperson Dumond advised a police officer was requested to be in attendance during a regular meeting whenever possible. Mayor Billis stated under Robert's Rules, the chair can appoint a Sergeant at Arms and under the city charter, the council can appoint a Sergeant at Arms. He suggested appointing Officer Richardson as the Sergeant at Arms

if council approved. Bill Runyan suggested appointing someone who is off duty. Councilperson Ockerman explained council wanted an officer present because of what has been going in the world so a decision was made to have an officer present for at least the first half hour of the meeting.

Keith Johnson, 211 Hastings Street, asked for a clarification on the water line break. He stated the city lost a lot of water and it cost a lot of money. He asked if the line would break again. Mr. Crawford advised the line is very old, and there was a pile of dirt on top of the section that broke that may have done something to the ground.

Linda Lawson, 534 N. Brady Street, advised she has been involved with the Halloween party, the Festival of Trees, and Christmas in the Historical Village, which were very well attended by people in and around the community, and very much enjoyed by all who came. She further advised she has put in countless hours helping get the Community Center, Fair Office Building, and Bunkhouse in order. She also advised she did not know Tim Crawford before working with him, so her opinions are unbiased by personal friendship. Ms. Lawson stated she has been in close contact with Tim and his crew at the department of public works. If she needs something moved, she calls Tim. If she needs something fixed, she calls Tim. She further stated when she puts in a work order, and she has put in several, if the department of public works could not do it that day, it was done the next. Ms. Lawson continued by stating when the floor at the community center unexpectedly needed washing after the Halloween Party, she called Tim and someone was there within the hour to wash it. She knew she was probably pulling someone off of another job, so she did her part by sweeping the floor down for them so they didn't have to spend as much time on the job. She further stated when she had to have some heavy, bulky items moved from one building to another and her partner was unavoidably detained elsewhere, she called him at the last minute and someone was there within five minutes to move it for her. Again, she knew she was pulling them off of another job so she did her part by helping them load the stuff. She advised these were just a few examples of her encounters with the department of public works. Ms. Lawson stated she wanted council to know why she was giving this testimonial to Tim and his crew. She continued by stating that no one asked her to do this; she came to the meeting on her own. She further stated according to an article in the Argus Press, dissatisfaction with the department of public works was voiced at the last council meeting and she wanted to cast a different light on the department of public works. She advised she feels they do an excellent job and, in her opinion, Tim is a hard-working, dedicated employee, and it would be a shame to lose such a person. She concluded by thanking Tim and the guys in the department of public works for all of the assistance they have given her and thanked the other people who have been involved in the many projects at McCurdy Park. Their "can-do" attitude is refreshing and very much appreciated.

Steve Corey, 316 W. Mack Street, suggested the city get together with Caledonia Township and the private property owners along the river walk to discuss taking the broken sidewalks that will be removed during the streetscape project and using them along the river to prevent erosion. He stated the Department of Natural Resources might require a permit, but there should be enough lead time to get one. Mr. Corey advised the

bridge located in McCurdy Park needs to have some repair work done on the south side. The asphalt is starting to cave in and suggested using some of the cement pieces in this area also. He further advised the Riverwalk Apartment area could use cement to help with the erosion in that area.

Don Runyon, 563 Cary Street, stated he thought the mayor going to Washington, D.C. was a good idea. The conference has a lot to do with Corunna. The city needs any information it can get and the city needs to be upgraded.

Dave Wenzlick, 216 W. Williams Street, stated he was disturbed with the article that was in the Argus Press on January 13. He asked how the Argus Press obtained the itinerary for the article, because he was under the impression that it was suppose to come back to tonight's meeting. Mr. Wenzlick stated he did not personally like the way the Argus Press attacked the city's mayor and certain council members. He advised the mayor wanted to better educate himself. He further advised council members have the right to vote what they believe to be right. He also advised there is money budgeted for educational seminars and the mayor is footing most of the bill himself. Mr. Wenzlick stated the Argus Press asked what the conference had to do with Corunna and he wanted to cover a few of the issues such as gun control and school violence. Mr. Wenzlick advised there have been bomb threats, guns and knives at the high school. The city needs to keep up with technology. He further advised infrastructure would be covered at the conference and the city has a terrible problem with infrastructure.

Sandi Wenzlick, 216 W. Williams Street, stated she was deeply concerned with the article in the Argus Press, and it was the straw that broke the camel's back for what has gone on with the council since the election. She further stated she was saddened and angered by the article on January 13 and biased journalism is alive once again in the Argus Press. She addressed the article by stating the issues mentioned in the editorial have something to do with not only Corunna but with any town in the United States. People should take their heads out of the sand to see that there are many problems in the community. Just because the problems are not always reported does not mean they do not exist. Ms. Wenzlick advised the day before the editorial was published, the front page of the Argus Press reported that the gentleman who called in the high school bomb threat on November 29 was arrested. Last year, the Corunna schools had numerous bomb threats and dogs were brought in to sniff out drugs and weapons. She further advised if Mayor Billis can get information to help prevent this problem then good for him, or should the city wait until there is a tragedy. She also advised her son is a high school student and she wants him home safe after school and in school. Ms. Wenzlick stated there are drugs in the community and reported there was a drug house across the street from her house and the lady was finally caught and arrested. The lady has moved so the problem across the street has been fixed, but asked who is selling drugs to the children now. She also stated in her opinion, knowledge is the best prevention against any problems facing a large or small community and that is what Mayor Billis was asking for; the chance to gain some knowledge and insight on various issues that affect any community. Ms. Wenzlick advised it was true some of the articles stated may not be a big deal now for Corunna, but if Mayor Billis can get some education before they become a problem then perhaps they will not be a problem. She further advised Mayor

Billis asked for \$800 to go to Washington, D.C. and all of the expenses above this amount would be paid out of his own pocket. She also advised the statement in the Argus Press about the mayor going to the conference to hobnob was a direct shot at the mayor, and it was a cheap one at that. Since the city has money for everyone else on staff to further their own education, to attend police conferences or Michigan Municipal League conferences, then she does not see a problem letting Mayor Billis go. She does not understand what business it is of the Argus Press, because the Argus Press is not a registered voter in the community. Ms. Wenzlick stated she was concerned how the Argus Press got the information about the conference. She asked if the information was leaked to the Argus Press and if so, for what purpose, or did the Argus Press look up the information itself. Ms. Wenzlick advised there seems to be quite a bit of foolishness in council since the election and it has been reported in many newspapers that there is a four to two majority on the council. If the four members do not get their own way, they go on the attack and the Argus Press article is a perfect example of this. She further advised she, for one, is proud of her council people for voting what they believe to be right. This is called democracy. She also advised she has attended several council meetings and has seen Councilpersons Ockerman and Runyan laughed at and belittled for doing what they believe is right and for the taxpayers. They follow the rules of the city charter and there should not be a problem with anyone following the rules. Ms. Wenzlick stated it appears the majority on the council want to make up their own rules to pursue its own agenda, and it was time for the council majority to realize that they work for the taxpayers and the city and not for their own personal agendas. She further stated she is proud of the people who run for city office and hopes the city council can begin to work together. She respects the council's right to vote how they want to on any given issue, but they should not be afraid to be the minority. She asked council to work together for the betterment of the city, to forget their own personal agendas and to make Corunna their only agenda.

CONSIDER BIDS FOR COUNCILROOM TABLES: Dumond moved, Hornus seconded to accept the bid from Open Plan Systems for seven tables in the amount of \$2,235.60, which includes shipping, delivery and installation.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Hornus, Bendall, Dumond, Bayless, Ockerman, Runyan.

No: None.

Motion CARRIED

CONSIDER BIDS FOR COUNCILROOM CHAIRS: Dumond moved, Hornus seconded to accept the bid from Elliott/Dach Associates, Inc. for fourteen chairs and one chair dolly in the amount of \$2,654.10.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Bendall, Bayless, Runyan, Dumond, Hornus, Ockerman.

No: None.

Motion CARRIED

RECONSIDER MOTION TO ATTEND UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS:

Bayless moved, Ockerman seconded to revote to consider spending \$800 to send Mayor Billis to the United States Conference of Mayors in Washington, D.C. due to new information that was not available at the prior meeting.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Hornus, Ockerman, Runyan.

No: Dumond, Bendall, Bayless.

Motion DEFEATED

LETTER FROM COUNCILPERSON BAYLESS: Councilperson Ockerman stated he wanted it stated for the record that a letter from Councilperson Al Bayless was sent to Mayor Billis on January 10, 2000. The letter instructed the city manager to send a copy of the letter to all council members. In addition, an e-mail letter dated January 6, 2000 was sent to Lisa Hitchcock with instructions to use the letter anyway she chose, and a copy of this letter was sent to council on January 14, 2000. Councilperson Ockerman asked Councilperson Bayless to read his letter. Councilperson Bayless advised the audience what prompted him to write his letter. He explained there were five items added to the agenda the night of the last meeting, and there was nothing in the council packets to support those items. The city manager was not aware these items were being added, and no councilperson was able to do any homework, research, or consider any of those items. Councilperson Bayless read the letter he sent to Mayor Billis. He stated he realized the tone of the letter was a little strong, but this was his way of venting, but he feels the content and the facts are accurate. He further stated he was not trying to make any personal attacks, but he was concerned the meetings were getting out of hand and adding items to the agenda at the last minute was his number one concern. He also stated he wanted to go on record that he was in full support of the job that Tim Crawford and the department of public works are doing. Councilperson Ockerman stated it is assumed the minority and the mayor are against Mr. Crawford and the city workers. He further stated he supported Mr. Crawford at the beginning and has never said a bad word about him. He also stated if anyone had received a letter like this and felt their integrity was being challenged, they would be upset and would want to defend themselves and their honor. Ockerman moved, Runyan seconded to replace the city manager effective immediately. Mayor Billis stated under the Open Meetings Act, a person has the right to a certain degree of privacy if a complaint is going to be lodged against them. Councilperson Bendall advised it was her understanding that any discussion on this subject should be done in closed session, and Ms. Hitchcock has requested this. Mayor Billis advised Ms. Hitchcock has requested that any discussion pertaining to her performance should be conducted during closed session and agreed that Ms. Hitchcock or anybody else should have a certain degree of privacy if they choose. Councilperson Hornus advised it was not on the agenda anyway. Councilperson Bayless advised he had several problems with this area of discussion and he would not participate in any discussion. Council does not have any information and the party involved has requested that it be kept quiet. Councilperson Runyan stated he has been on the council for almost a year, and has been labeled a troublemaker before his first council meeting. He has seen things happen and has heard things that question his integrity and character. He further stated if bringing a violation to point is a personal attack, then so be it. If questions are asked about vendor disbursements, it is because someone needs an answer. He also stated we have to respect

others opinions, ideas, beliefs, and decisions even if they are different than their own. But most of all, we have to come to meetings with an open mind and with the ability to change our original thoughts on an issue before council. Mayor Billis advised there was a motion and support on the floor. He asked Councilperson Runyan to withdraw his support, which he did. Councilperson Bayless stated he had one final comment. It was not his intention to make his letter public and he certainly did not want to embarrass anyone including the mayor. He further stated he wanted to get rid of the majority-minority stuff forever and apologized for any embarrassment he might have caused anyone. The motion died for lack of support.

Councilperson Dumond left at 8:46 p.m.

CALL TO AUDIENCE: Don Runyon, 563 Cary Street, stated he read in the paper the charter is being worked on and is changing. He asked how council could follow a charter that is being changed. Mayor Billis advised the charter is being amended, but the city is still operating under the existing city charter. Mr. Runyon stated he read it was being updated. Mayor Billis advised there are some updates. Mr. Runyon stated that is changing it. Mayor Billis advised the verbage was also being clarified. Mr. Runyon stated that is just like somebody saying that a paragraph is one sentence. He further stated he did not know where that person went to school. Councilperson Bendall stated the paragraph she was referring to was one sentence. Mr. Runyon stated no commas. Councilperson Bendall stated there were commas, but there were not periods in the paragraph.

Gene Sanderson, 609 S. Shiawassee Street, stated he wanted to know why council spent one and one-half hours discussing the \$800 to send the mayor to Washington, D.C. that was approved two weeks ago when it only took five minutes to vote on the new tables and chairs and to spend \$6,000. He further stated four people spoke in favor of the mayor, and we are the people of Corunna speaking, and he did not think anybody who voted against it even listened to the people. He also stated that is the trouble; nobody ever listens to the people of Corunna. Mr. Sanderson advised there are two men, Bob Ockerman and Larry Runyan, who are doing an outstanding job and the four others want to sit back and see how they can cut someone down.

Gary Schooley, 301 Ferry Street, advised he was against the mayor going to Washington, D.C., but he clearly hopes the mayor will go to the Conference of Mayors for Michigan at Mackinaw Island because he thinks the city will get a whole lot of use out of it. He further advised as far as the article in the paper goes, Will Rogers said if you put my name in the paper spell it right. Mr. Schooley stated we might not like the paper's content, but it got everybody talking. He further stated he has been a Corunna resident for 59 years going on 60 and when he was a young lad, it was people like the Striggows and the Grahams, who ran the city. As he got older, he got to know Keith Johnson, Bill Renwick, and Ron Stevenson. He thought they did a whale of job for the city, but he also found out he did not always agree with them, but he admired the job they did. He also stated even though he does not always agree with the current council members, he does admire the job they were doing here. If he thought for one minute that this was a seventeenth century hick town, he would saddle up his horse and get the hell out of town.

Keith Johnson, 211 Hastings Street, stated council did more in the last fifteen minutes than they have in the last three or four months. He further stated he wanted everyone to know the mayor came to his house one night and the mayor told him he had a little problem with communicating. Mayor Billis asked how he would handle the situation since he was a former mayor. Mr. Johnson stated he told Mayor Billis he spent a lot of time with the manager and council people in the back room where everyone yelled and screamed at each other. He further stated council, the mayor, and the manager should get in a back room and scream at one another and be done with it. He also stated he admires the people sitting on the council and for what they are trying to do. This is government at its finest tonight. Everyone might have screamed and hollered and hurt some feelings but this is the way it should be. He suggested to council that they go into the back room with all of the parties involved and then come out to council chambers and get on with the business.

Pat Sanderson, 224 W. McNeil Street, asked Councilperson Bayless why he did not take his feelings directly to the mayor instead of writing his comments down in a letter. Councilperson Bayless advised she had a very good point. He stated his work schedule is such that it did not allow him to do that, but he probably should have made a phone call. Mrs. Sanderson advised she is only a homemaker and does not have a lot of places to go, but she would have went to the mayor to begin with before she came to the meeting. Councilperson Bayless thanked Mrs. Sanderson for her suggestion.

Sandi Wenzlick, 216 W. Williams Street, stated it has been pointed out there might be illegal activities done with the city charter, but we, the taxpayers, really should have the right to know about it. Mayor Billis stated the city charter has been discussed several times since he has been mayor and council needs to follow it. He further stated when issues involve employees and things of this nature, it should be done in closed session.

Dick Sanderson, 224 W. McNeil Street, stated there are some people on this council that cannot accept that Mayor Billis was elected mayor. They do not like it and that was his opinion.

Gene Sanderson, 609 S. Shiawassee Street, asked if Councilperson Dumond would get his full \$10 for leaving early. Mayor Billis advised Councilperson Dumond had his own reason for leaving the meeting.

Linda Lawson, 534 N. Brady Street, stated she has found in her lifetime that if you treat people with respect, you will get respect in return. She further stated she was not talking about a certain group of people; she was talking about people in general.

Pat Sanderson, 224 W. McNeil Street, asked if there has been discussion about getting microphones so the audience can hear. Mayor Billis stated the item was still being discussed. Councilperson Ockerman advised council has looked into microphones, but they are kind of expensive, but council was looking at smaller ones that might not be so expensive. He further advised council is aware this is a problem.

ADJOURN: Hornus moved, Ockerman seconded to adjourn.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Bayless, Runyan, Bendall, Ockerman, Hornus.

No: None.

Motion CARRIED Time was 9:35 p.m.

DR. JAMES BILLIS, MAYOR

YVONNE F. LONG, CITY CLERK