

**JOURNAL OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE BLUE ISLAND CITY  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
OCTOBER 11, 2023**

1) **Call to Order**

The Committee of the Whole Meeting of the City of Blue Island was called to order by Mayor Bilotto at 6:03 p.m. on October 11, 2023.

2) **Pledge of Allegiance**

3) **Roll Call**

Roll Call indicates the following:

Present:	6	Carr, Roll, Montoya, Rita, Fahrenwald (6:26 pm), McGee (6:18 pm)
Absent:	1	Johnson
Present Also:	3	Raeann Cantelo-Zylman, City Clerk Erin Blake, City Attorney Mark Patoska, Deputy City Administrator

4) **Presentation of Journal of Proceedings**

a. **Motion to approve the Minutes from the Committee of the Whole Meeting on September 13, 2023.**

**Motion by Alderman Roll, second by Alderman Carr to approve Minutes for the Committee of the Whole for September 13, 2023.**

Ayes:	4	Carr, Roll, Montoya, Rita
Nays:	0	
Absent:	3	Johnson, Fahrenwald, McGee
Abstention:	0	

There being four (4) Affirmative Votes, the Mayor declared the motion carried.

5) **Public Comment**

Mr. Shepard has worked on organizing the "Blessing of the Water" at the Waterfall on Cal Sag Channel for the last fifteen years and appreciates the City for their support and assistance. However, he noted that even though the City has a lovely and delightful place, it needs to be more disability accessible.

6) **New Business**

Mr. Steve Lang of Great Lakes Urban Forestry surveyed all of the city's trees. These consultants are professional arborists with five years of industry expertise who examined fundamental health conditioning ratings on the City's trees. GIS maps aid in data analysis, allowing for the creation of priority tree removal lists, the development of cyclical pruning programs, the identification of prospective high-risk trees, and the creation of tree planting plans. Blue Island has 4,218 street trees and 104 different species, which is nice but not ideal, so they will work on a plan to improve diversity.

Alderman Rita inquired whether Great Lakes Urban Forestry or Public Works will be in charge of tree trimming. Mr. Lang stated that they only collect data. They have no conflict of interest and do not bid on work; instead, they merely recommend it.

Val Kehoe mentioned that the Urban Forestry Board wants to apply for a no-match grant of up to \$100,000 through the Inflation Reduction Act to help with training, salary, and reciprocal cleaning. The Forestry Board held a town hall meeting in early January 2023 and spoke with citizens and other departments, which was successful. They planned to host another town hall meeting in January 2024.

The Mayor noted that he received a letter from Morton Arboretum thanking the City of Blue Island for their assistance and informing them of the grant awards.

7) **Mayor's Report**

**a. Business License/Health Inspection Ordinance.**

City Attorney, Erin Blake, advised the City Council that she consulted with the Health Inspector regarding this ordinance amendment and the health inspector's research regarding comparable fees included review of other communities like as Tinley Park, Robbins, Orland Park, and Oak Lawn.

**b. Retiree Health Insurance.**

City Attorney, Erin Blake, informed the City Council that the City is proposing to combine all existing retiree health insurance ordinances into one ordinance which clarifies what all prior ordinances state. This will not change retiree health benefits;

but will allow enforcement of prior ordinances to ensure all retirees are receiving the correct coverage.

Alderman Roll inquired if they could speak about the implications of this adjustment in terms of historical implementation versus temporary implementation.

City Attorney, Erin Blake, indicated that historically, the City did not completely implement the code changes relating to retiree health benefits; but moving forward, enforcing the ordinance changes will have a minimal impact on some retirees, particularly those retirees who previously paid nothing and now may pay \$100. Many retirees received years of free insurance due to this lack of enforcement/implementation. The City's insurance brokers are collaborating with the administration to provide retirees with information, modifications, and options.

Alderman Roll asked if there a sense of impact? If so, how much. Who will be impacted? City Attorney, Erin Blake, noted that the City has an excel spreadsheet that they will share with him.

The Mayor inquired as to how much a retired firefighter would be paying going forward. Deputy City Administrator, Mark Patoska, stated firemen are different because of the CBA; therefore, there is no change for firefighters. City Attorney, Erin Blake, stated that fireman negotiated a very beneficial plan for retired fireman.

The Mayor rephrased the question, using a retiree in an administrative role as an example. Deputy City Administrator, Mark Patoska, stated that an administrative retiree would be provided singular coverage under the Blue Choice plan and would contribute the same amount as a single non-retired employee.

Deputy City Administrator, Mark Patoska, informed the Council that the City is currently paying \$45,000 per month for retiree insurance coverage when they should be spending \$25,000 to \$30,000 per month.

Alderman Roll inquired whether or not the adjustments implemented are relevant to all employees who are currently retired or will be retiring. Deputy City Administrator, Mark Patoska, stated it varies by CBA.

Alderman Rita asked what is CBA? Deputy City Administrator, Mark Patoska, stated Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Deputy City Administrator, Mark Patoska, stated that Public Works personnel employed after 2003, Fire Department employees hired after 2006, and Police Department employees hired after June 2015 are not eligible for retirement health insurance.

Alderman Rita noted that she was present for many of these changes and that it is frustrating to her that the effort put into them was not acknowledged.

The Mayor emphasized that they cannot alter the past but can only make changes in the future.

Alderman Roll appreciates the insurance brokers providing retired and future retirees with ample warning and timing to propose options. Deputy City Administrator, Mark Patoska, the open enrollment period for employees and retirees will begin in late November and early December and will finish on January 1, 2024. Some retirees are allowed more time based on their age of 65 to enroll in supplemental Medicare part "B" insurance after January 1st. Letters will be sent out immediately, with insurance brokers and Medicare specialists on hand to answer any issues.

Alderman Fahrenwald apologized for his lateness and asked if the City is satisfied that implementing this will not result in a lawsuit brought by employees. City Attorney, Erin Blake, stated they will look into it, but we are confident that we are not taking away benefits that would be a potential basis for a lawsuit.

**c. Halloween Trick or Treat Hours.**

The Mayor indicated that the hours will be from 3 to 7 p.m.

Alderman Fahrenwald confirmed with the Mayor and Chief of Police that the streets off 127th Street will be closed that day. The Mayor stated that both were aware.

**d. Mayor's Announcements/Comments.**

No comments.

**8) City Clerk's Announcements/Reports/Comments**

**a. City Clerk's Announcements.**

City Clerk, Raeann Cantelo-Zylman, notified everyone that the scarecrow building has been rescheduled to Monday at 6 pm due to the weather.

**9) City's Attorney's Report**

**a. Attorney Announcements.**

No comment.

**10) City Administrator's Announcements/Reports/Comments**

**a. Update regarding PZBA hearing on hospital planned unit development application.**

Community Development Manager, Howard Coppari, informed City Council that the former Metro South Hospital suggested six uses for the property; but that the application was tabled at the last meeting due to the PZBA's difficulties with the size of the studio apartment, cost of the studio, lack of security plan, and finance plan.

Alderman Fahrenwald stated that he attended the meeting and thanked Howard Coppari for devoting so much time to this matter; however, after viewing the presentation, there are a few issues such as lack of specificity and commitments by partners required to move forward. He did not believe the owners were ready.

Community Development Manager, Howard Coppari, stated that the six uses include senior housing, an adult day care, an urgent care, grocery store, hotel, and medical office. The senior living will be handled by Senior Life Styles Management, the urgent care will be administered by Premier Occupational Health, and the hotel will only be used by relatives traveling from out of state. The grocer has not yet been named, and the medical office could be a surgical treatment facility. The studio rent will be \$2,000, and the apartment rent will be \$3,000 per month. They wanted to use existing signage, but they needed to go through a preliminary and final assessment.

Alderman Roll noted that the criterion regarding proposed size units and cost prompted it to be tabled, but he wondered what the board's qualitative interest was in those things? Howard Coppari, Community Development Manager, claimed that Jason Berry and other board members prefer studio, two bedroom, and one bedroom apartments. They want things to be mixed up, and density isn't an issue with 214 apartments, 201 of which are studios and the rest are one bedrooms.

Alderman Roll inquired about the pricing. Howard Coppari, Community Development Manager, noted that it is highly noteworthy when compared to the wider Chicagoland area.

Alderman Fahrenwald added that he looked at various senior suites and mentioned that his mother-in-law resides in Joliet in a one-bedroom apartment with a microwave, refrigerator, and a decent kitchen for \$2,000 per month, which is less than what they are offering here.

Community Development Manager, Howard Coppari, indicated that he supplied a link to what each studio and apartment will have. More services, such as housekeeping, counseling, outpatient treatment, physical therapy, speech therapy, and personal care, can be included at an additional cost.

Alderman Carr remarked that her niece lives in downtown Chicago in a 700 square foot studio for \$1,400, which is more than twice the size of the apartment offered here. She noted that the rents proposed are excessively high, and in some circumstances, seniors will not receive adequate social security to pay this rent. The typical monthly income is between \$1,700 and \$1,800 based only on social security.

Community Development Manager, Howard Coppari, indicated that one of the reasons they are firm on 300 square feet is that they want to maintain the walls in place for cost reasons.

Alderman Rita reiterated parking. Community Development Manager, Howard Coppari, noted that parking will be additional because it will be kept under an umbrella.

The Mayor met with several members of the zoning board, and every worry was raised, and they believe they will support this as well as Howard, which is why they tabled. Even though the meeting lasted three hours, it was insufficient time to go over everything in depth.

**b. City Administrator’s Announcements/Comments**

No comment.

**11) Aldermanic Announcements/Reports/Comments**

**a. Aldermanic Announcements/Reports/Comments**

No comment.

**12) Adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11) to discuss litigation that has been filed and is pending before a court or an administrative tribunal and actions of probable or imminent litigation.**

No Executive Session.

**13) Motion for Adjournment**

**Motion by Alderman Rita, second by Alderman Fahrenwald to adjourn the regular meeting.**

Ayes: 6 Carr, Roll, Montoya, Rita, Fahrenwald, McGee

Nays: 0

Absent: 1 Johnson

Abstention: 0

There being six (6) Affirmative Votes, the Mayor declared the motion carried.



**Raeann Cantelo-Zylman, City Clerk**

**APPROVED BY ME THIS  
15<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF NOVEMBER 2023**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Fred Bilotto', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

**Fred Bilotto, Mayor**