

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ST. JOSEPH, MISSOURI

August 30, 2010 - 4:20 p.m.
Office of the City Clerk

CALL TO ORDER:

The Council of the City of St. Joseph, Missouri, met in a called special meeting in the 4th Floor Conference Room at City Hall, on Monday, August 30, 2010, at 4:20 p.m. The meeting was called to order at 4:20 p.m. by Mayor Falkner. Notice of said meeting (together with an agenda) was posted at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting in the City Clerk's office.

ROLL CALL:

Present were Councilmembers Boyer, Falkner, Jones, Kovac, LaBass, Myers, Penland, Roach, Starr--9. Total membership--9. Five members constitute a quorum.

Also present were City Manager Vincent J. Capell, Asst. City Attorney Ted Elo, Health Director Debra Bradley, Planning & Community Development Director Clint Thompson, Communications Manager Mary Robertson and City Clerk Paula Heyde.

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CALL FOR SPECIAL MEETING:

37023 Filed 8/24/10 - A written request has been received from nine members of the Council this date requesting a special meeting of the Council to be held in the 4th Floor Conference Room at City Hall, on Monday, August 30, 2010, at 4:20 p.m., to consider the following bill for passage:

BILL FOR PASSAGE:

A Bill (#177-10) submitting a proposition to the qualified voters of the City of St. Joseph, Missouri to increase the current three percent (3%) Transient Guest (Hotel/Motel) Tax by five percent (5%) for the purpose of funding the promotion of tourism and convention facilities, including capital expenditures therefore, at an election to be held on November 2, 2010.

NOW, THEREFORE, as City Clerk of the City of St. Joseph, under the provisions of Section 3.9(a) of the Charter of the City of St. Joseph, I hereby issue a call for a special meeting of the Council for the time and place and for the purpose as set forth above in accordance with the written request of the Council.

(SEAL)

/s/ Paula Heyde
Paula Heyde, City Clerk

BILL FOR PASSAGE:

37024 (S.O. 8057) A Bill (#177-10) submitting a proposition to the qualified voters of the City of St. Joseph, Missouri to increase the current three percent (3%) Transient Guest (Hotel/Motel) Tax by five percent (5%) for the purpose of funding the promotion of tourism and convention facilities, including capital expenditures therefore, at an election to be held on November 2, 2010, having been read the first time on August 9, 2010, was read the second time and passed. Ayes, Boyer, Falkner, Jones, Kovac, Myers, Penland, Roach, Starr—8. Nay, LaBass—1.

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NOTES:

Agenda No. 37024 – Jim Nadolski, said he is part owner in a building in the downtown and he is absolutely in favor of this proposed tax increase and he finds it hard to believe that increasing it to eight percent would cause a loss in conventions and things like that. From his perspective, he is seeing progress in the downtown area for the first time in 25 years. He would like to believe that this tax will allow certain things to be developed and certain things to be carried on that we haven't been able to do so far. This is a fabulous idea.

Ted Allison, President/CEO of the St. Joseph Area Chamber of Commerce, said prospective new businesses want to see the downtown. They see the downtown as an indicator of the health and vibrancy of the community and our willingness to invest in our community. The Chamber Board of Directors voted unanimously last week in support of this proposal. They are very excited about each component, in particular the three percent that would be dedicated to capital projects for downtown. They share the vision to build a conference center and feel an asset that will help accommodate larger conferences and have it be walk able to other amenities in the downtown is needed. The studies that have been done have lead us to this point; we've been studying and dreaming for four years, it's time to move from studying, dreaming and planning to actual action steps to take us toward this goal. He knows there is a concern that some of our major employers will be paying this higher rate. He talked to representatives from Boehringer, Heartland, Altec and others about this subject and all have indicated that as long as they see benefit from such an asset being built, they feel it is money well spent.

Robert Dempster, St. Joseph Downtown Partnership, Inc. member, said the Partnership endorsed the proposal last week. Downtown redevelopment has been part of the strategic plan for the past ten to 15 years and this is the first funding mechanism that has really come in to play.

Rebecca Boerkircher, Executive Director of the St. Joseph Downtown Partnership, Inc. said they had the exit interview with the state officials on the DREAM Initiative and they want to know what funding mechanism the city is going to come up with for some of the goals that have been set out for the Dream Initiative and strategic plan. The state is in a position where they're going to help us with the formation of a MODESA once the city gets it's funding in place. The funding is necessary to get the other funding mechanisms that are needed to make these goals a reality.

Jim Thompson, President of Stoney Creek Inn, as a business owner in this community expressed his concern about the five percent increase in the tax which is a 166% increase to them. He wants the Council to be aware that about 25% of their business probably don't care about what the rate is but the remaining 75% is a much more complex mixture. Sixty percent of their business is directly or indirectly related to the local business community and budget consideration and added costs affect them. This increase will make St. Joseph's rate higher than anyone else in the state. He asked the Council to heavily consider the risks they are asking them to take and if there is any way to find a strategy that would allow the increase to be stair stepped and move in a more prudent approach to obtaining the same objective, they would appreciate it.

Frank Flesher, National Military Museum, said the downtown building blocks do not include the museums but they are the foundation of the city's tourism business. They do not get anywhere near the support they should get from the city. This is the only museum like this in the United States. No one has approached them about this issue. If the museums don't get help, they are in a world of hurt. Utility bills are up and attendance will be down. Right now he can't say whether he supports the tax increase or not.

Councilmember Pat Jones, on behalf of the St. Joseph Fire Museum, said they support the 1% that has been proposed to be allocated to the museums.

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Teresa Fankhauser, Executive Director of the Allied Arts Council, said she personally supports the proposed tax increase; she hasn't discussed this with her board yet. She thinks it will benefit the downtown and it will help with the investment of the arts in the community and she hopes that a percentage of the tax increase will go towards investing in the arts which are a huge tourism factor in St. Joseph.

Donald Sherwood, 415 N. 10th St., asked if the corporate suites like those at Mitchell Park will be taxed. City Manager Vincent J. Capell said no.

Joe Morrey, 4110 Miller Rd., said he owns property in the downtown. Just because there is five percent available, doesn't mean that's the thing to do. He hopes the City Council will make the best decision on this issue and that is to keep his hometown viable and competitive.

ADJOURNMENT:

37025 By general consent, the Council adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Paula Heyde, CMC, City Clerk