

**AGENDA  
SPECIAL MEETING  
SALEM CITY COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, MAY 25, 2021  
6:00 PM**

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance**
- III. Planning Session for the purpose of developing long and short-term goals for economic and community development.**
- IV. Adjournment**

Rex A. Barbee  
City Manager

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**MINUTES  
CITY OF SALEM SPECIAL MEETING  
PLANNING SESSION  
MAY 25, 2021**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

A special meeting of the Salem City Council was held on Tuesday, May 25, 2021, for the purpose of developing short- and long-term goals for economic and community development for the City of Salem. No action will be taken. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Nic Farley at 6:00 pm.

**Council members present:**

Councilman Jim Koehler  
Councilman Royce Bringwald  
Councilwoman Amy Troutt  
Councilman Craig Morton  
Mayor Nic Farley

**Council members absent:** None.

**Others present:**

City Manager Rex Barbee	City Clerk Bev Quinn
Finance Director Keli Barrow	Chief of Police Sean Reynolds
Economic Development Dir. Tabitha Meador	Public Works Dir. Annette Brushwitz
Members of the Media and Public	

**II. PRAYER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Opening prayer was offered by Councilman Koehler, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. PLANNING SESSION**

Mayor Farley indicated the City Council will be using the SWOT Analysis process to identify factors for growth, with participants providing input informally.

**Planning Strategies – SWOT Analysis**

- a) **Strengths** to use to spur growth and quality of life
- b) **Weaknesses** in our ability to attract growth factors
- c) **Opportunities** and how we can utilize them
- d) **Threats** that derail plans for growth and stability
  - i. Work force capacity
  - ii. Adequate housing – new starts??

**a) STRENGTHS**

*(Input from all involved.)*

Schools; community police force; park system; Aquatic Center; infrastructure upgrades; recreation opportunities; water, wastewater treatment and gas plants; Gigabit Community; Enterprise Zone; highways and interstate; traffic count; Ministerial Alliance; Mission Salem; Sleep in Heavenly Peace; Library; service organizations; county seat, Salem Theatre; Salem Historical Museum; health care; caring residents; family life.

**b) WEAKNESSES**

Insufficient quantity of mid-range housing; lack of opportunities for young professionals; jobs; entertainment; cultural events; lack of activities geared at single adults; Public transit opportunities.

**c) OPPORTUNITIES**

Marketing to families; Enterprise Zone and tools to incentivize; more promotion of William Jennings Bryan; Live music at Marion County Fairgrounds and the Bryan Park stage; increased signage for the City parking lot, dog park, disc golf, hospital and Aquatic Center.

Discussion ensued regarding allowing alcohol in the park for musical events, with Fin. Dir. Barrow asking who would assume the responsibility for liability? Overtime for officers? Dir. Brushwitz suggested maybe winery tastings, which are controlled. Councilman Morton indicated he attends a car show in Kentucky that is held downtown, and everyone is drinking on the street.

Mayor Farley indicated he feels the City has a lot of open real estate at Kinney Blvd and along the interstate, and he'd like to see a truck stop and a restaurant. City Manager Barbee responded that some of the property along that area is not owned by the City, and some owners don't want to sell. Mayor Farley responded that he feels the City has enough tools in its box to make it happen. Additionally, he would like to see more homes built, and suggested a public/private partnership. Dir. Brushwitz indicated it would be better when the City forces demolition, to take possession of the properties and split the empty lots between the adjacent property owners, as it would remove them from the City's maintenance list, and most of them are not large enough to develop for housing. City Manager Barbee indicated he feels there are some entrepreneurs in Salem who might be interested in development of apartments and duplexes, once the cost of construction goes down. Dir. Brushwitz commented that it is important to control what is built to maintain the integrity of the town.

**d) THREATS**

Loss of State funding (*10% reduction in LGDF*); inadequate work force; loss of population; inadequate housing; empty lots (*city currently maintaining 30, and has insufficient workforce to do so*); costs associated with the Police Reform Bill (*unfunded mandates*); Loss of institutional knowledge caused by several senior staff members planning retirement, and the need for succession planning.

City Manager Barbee suggested the asking that the Planning Commission work on updating the Subdivision Ordinance. Zoning Administrator Quinn responded that the Planning Commission had worked on that for several years, and adopted a new subdivision code less than 10 years ago.

Mayor Farley indicated he did not feel the City was being aggressive enough on applying for grants. Finance Dir. Barrow responded that we will be receiving \$1,000,000 in grants for '21 and '22. Barrow added that any grant that the City *CAN* apply for, we do apply for. Barrow added that the City applied for a "shelf ready" grant for the water towers, and the State has sat on it for a year. The project has to be done. Dir. Meador added that she had also applied for a Rebuild Illinois Grant, and the award date keeps getting pushed back. Dir. Barrow added that the pricing for the water tower grant application was pre-COVID-19, and of it is awarded, we will have to revisit the costs with the contractors. Brushwitz added that she has several "shelf-ready" projects ready to go. Dir. Barrow indicated that FEMA is not doing tornado sirens during COVID, as they are directing their funds to other disaster relief. Additionally, the City doesn't always have the \$2 million in match funds. Meador added that some of the grants announced in Centralia are not grants Salem can received, as they have different minority and income demographics.

**2-5 Year Focus**

Mayor Farley asked what the City should be focused on for the next 2-5 years. Councilman Koehler indicated business retention. Mayor Farley concurred, and indicated he would like to see the city help preserve and improve current businesses. Both Bettendorf Stanford and Jarco have been making improvements and growing their businesses. Councilman Koehler indicated personal contact from the City goes a long way.

Councilman Morton indicated he would like to see the City focus on housing. Councilman Bringwald indicated he wants to improve and preserve our city.

Economic Development Director Meador indicated one of the key issues will be engaging the Tourism Board and encouraging them to be proactive with a marketing campaign including Facebook, Hidden Gems, brochures, history markers, and promoting I-57 as a consistent point. We also need a map of Salem.

Councilwoman Trout indicated she would like to see a focus on a protective culture of community. Trout added that she worries about the issues some neighboring communities have creeping into our community. Chief of Police Reynolds added that the city's substandard housing is starting to bring the city down, and we need more mid-range homes. Mayor Farley added that one of the goals the former City Manager had was to get the Code Enforcement Officer certified to do inspections of rental properties between rentals. Mayor Farley added that Chief Dodson in Centralia places signs in front of homes that have been raided for drugs. City Manager Barbee added that if we are trying to provide attractions and amenities for millennials, we need to pull the trigger quickly. Mayor Farley indicated the one of the draws for young adults is that we are a gigabit community. Councilwoman Trout responded that the gigabit speed is not available in her neighborhood.

Councilwoman Trout indicated she would like to see workforce development be a focus with the schools. Mayor Farley concurred, and indicated training for the trades has fallen by the wayside. Farley added that the City has put some resources behind interesting high school students in the trades, and will continue to do so.

Councilman Koehler indicated he would like there to be a focus on downtown improvements, including additional signage. Koehler would also like to see a truck stop. Mayor Farley indicated the City used to attend the manufacturing trade show in Las Vegas, and it may be time to do that again. Farley added that he learned a lot at the shows, such as that franchises will locate where. Salem's demographics don't meet a lot of name brand franchises; for instance, Buffalo Wild Wings won't locate in a town that doesn't have a Lowes, Menards or a Kohls. Suggestions from the group to make Salem more attractive to young professionals included a craft brewery, a winery, live music events, development of Kinney Blvd. with recognizable brands, an additional motel, a truck stop, Aldi's, Sonic and a steak house or nice restaurant.

City Manager Barbee indicated the City has three lots on Kinney Blvd., and asked if the Council would be interested in an exchange of property to facilitate development of a truck stop. Consensus was support of the idea.

Mayor Farley indicated he would like to see the City have a five-year rolling plan for infrastructure improvements. City Manager Barbee indicated the City has a "shelf-ready" water line improvement project planned for the south end of town. Public Works Director Brushwitz concurred, and indicated the Jefferson Street project will be completed this year. Mayor Farley asked if we still have the cooperative sidewalk replacement project with home owners. Dir. Brushwitz indicated we do, and indicated that if the homeowners will dig out the existing concrete, the City will provide the concrete – or vice versa. This is something that homeowners need to schedule with her office. Councilwoman Trout asked how the City can best get community input in infrastructure issues. Hold forums? Conduct needs assessments? Surveys? What barriers are there to improvements? Dir. Brushwitz indicated one of the neighborhoods that needs to be addressed is McNeil Acres. The subdivision is more than 40 years old now, and storm water has gotten under the street gutters and they are now in bad shape.

Mayor Farley indicated one of the issues that has been brought to him by a number of employers is the lack of available work force. Farley added that Economic Development Dir. Meador had mentioned the possibility of recruiting from Puerto Rico, as they are already American citizens. If

that's the case, declaring Edith Kell Park as surplus for the development of a mobile home park might be an option.

Dir. Brushwitz indicated she wants the water towers painted as soon as possible. City Manager Barbee indicated we need to look at completion of two unfinished projects – the soccer field and the new Police Department. Barbee indicated he has budgeted \$75,000 for work on the soccer complex in the FY22 budget, including contouring the fields, installing drainage and to sow seed. Dir. Barrow indicated she had spoken with the O'Fallon soccer association, and they don't think teams will travel to Salem just to play on grass. Mayor Farley indicated he would like to see a timeline created, with cost estimates, and schedule a dedication for the soccer complex.

City Manager Barbee indicated the former Save-A-Lot building at 406 W. Main was purchased with the understanding that it would take a few years to make the necessary modifications in order to move the Police Department into the building. Consensus was that the building was in an ideal location, and we weren't sure how long the building would be available. Unfortunately, it appears the remodeling will cost approximately twice as much as originally estimated, with part of that being the telecommunications towers. Additionally, there are no grant funds available to assist with this project. Mayor Farley asked if the telecommunications section has to be moved. Chief Reynolds responded that it does. Discussion ensued regarding whether it would be cheaper to build new. Reynolds added that the plan at the time of purchase was that this would be a five-year project. Effingham recently built a new police department, and it cost approximately \$9 million. Mayor Farley indicated the cost estimate to renovate is \$1.5 which is \$300,000 per year for five years. Farley added that he doesn't know where we will get that, and asked if the city could finance it for 10 years. Finance Director Barrow responded that financing it for 10 years might make the City go over its debt limit. City Manager Barbee indicated that the city's current debt load limits our ability to apply for some USDA grants, but there may be something available in the future. Mayor Farley responded that if we are set on setting aside money each year for five years, he has concerns about what shape the building will be in. Chief Reynolds indicated the existing police department building is not structurally sound, and it may be necessary for a structural engineer or contractor to take a look at the building to be sure.

#### **Utility and Road Projects**

Public Works Dir. Brushwitz indicated if Council becomes aware of street projects that need to be done, to bring them to her attention. The new sewer lines that stopped near SCHS need to be completed to the north edge of town. Brushwitz indicated her "wish list" would include the City's own "cage", which protects employees from the ground collapsing on them when they are working in a hole. The cost of a cage would be covered by the cost of two repair projects where the repairs have to be contracted out. (*A good cage would cost approximately \$10,000.*) Brushwitz indicated the raw water line to Carlyle has 4-5 leaks each year, and she would like to budget for replacement of that line.

Mayor Farley asked about the work that was done on Hawthorn Rd.. Dir. Brushwitz responded that the Public Works Department has used FAU funds for what has been done on Hawthorn so far, and did as much as the funds would allow. Farley indicated there is a section that is outside the city limits, but going through that area with improvements would make a big difference.

#### **Funds Management**

Finance Director Barrow indicated that if we refund bonds while rates are low, we can save \$139,000, after fees. Barrow added that she can go to the smaller banks, see if they are interested, then look at the market. If rates aren't good, we can walk away. Mayor Farley indicated he appreciates the City being prudent with the tax payers' money.

Dir. Barrow indicated the water rates were increased 7.5% 13 years ago, and we *HAVE* to do an increase to manage the Water Fund. Barrow recommended a large increase now and a smaller increase every year after this year. The Water Fund balance is currently under \$1 M. If we had had a 2.5% increase each year, it would have been \$1.30 per month, which would have been much easier on customers. Barrow added that Curry and Associates has worked with her on the rate study. Chemical costs have raised dramatically and there have been a couple of huge repairs at the water plant, which contributed to the lower Fund balance. Councilwoman Troutt responded that the longer we put off implementing an increase, the worse it will be.

Chief Reynolds indicated the State of Illinois has not been friendly, as it is implementing additional unfunded mandates, one of which is digital communication. While this provides better communication between departments and officers, to the City Council it means additional expenses. Reynolds indicated he would like to invite Steve Whritenour of the Centralia PD to come speak to Council about utilizing Cares Act dollars to help with this. The mandate will require that department digitize 17 mobile radios and 36 portable radios. Between the police, fire, EMS and ESDA organizations, this will be a county-wide \$2-3 million project. Reynolds added that the Marion County, Salem and Centralia all have to agree to use the Cares Act funds for the funds to be available.

Chief Reynolds indicated the department has purchased a few AEDs over the years, but is currently working on a grant/donation program through a local business on replacing them. The AEDs have saved a few lives and are a good tool to have.

Chief Reynolds indicated the police department is busier than ever -- they are doing proactive policing and calls are up 10%. The officers are working hard. Year-to-date, the department is up about 600 calls. Reynolds added that the department could really use a sixth dispatcher (*we have five now, and they do an amazing job*) but a sixth dispatcher would allow us to have two dispatchers in the center at the same time. Councilwoman Troutt asked if there is much overtime for dispatchers. Chief Reynolds responded that the Dispatch supervisor does a phenomenal job of scheduling, but things are tight. The Marion County Sheriff's Department dispatchers don't handle 911 calls.

Chief Reynolds suggested it might be time to look at hiring an IT person that could serve all departments. IT needs keep increasing, with unfunded mandates requiring body cams (*which will increase data storage costs to \$30,000 annually*) and the need for additional personnel at the PD to do the necessary redacting for FOIA requests. Farley added that the redaction on a 15-minute video can take an hour, or more.

Chief Reynolds indicated the department has always had a good relationship with ICRMT (*the City's risk management agency*) and they have been very good to the police department. ICRMT has been helpful with the unfunded mandates on training, and recently provided the department with two additional tasers through a grant program. Reynolds thanked City Council members, past and present, for providing the excellent training opportunities his officers have, as the department is in excellent shape regarding newly mandated training -- they've already been doing it. Reynolds added that there will be a big personnel changeover in the next 1-3 years, with a lot of officers with supervisory experience and knowledge retiring. Reynolds added that the department has been pleased with the local city government, and none of those looking to retire a little early are doing it because of city government. This change will result in a cost savings on salaries, but the department will have to spend more for training.

Mayor Farley indicated he knows the police canine, Freddy, is nearing retirement, and City Council will need to consider whether or not to bring in another canine. Chief Reynolds responded that Freddy has been very successful. The community loves him, and he has assisted in several arrests. Reynolds added that he feels the community will rally and do fundraising to keep a police canine, if necessary.

Councilman Morton asked when the Task Force grant renews, as part of the agreement was an annual review and approval from Council. Chief Reynolds responded that he thinks it is October. Mayor Farley directed City Clerk Quinn to check on that renewal date. Chief Reynolds added that there is a huge meth problem in Salem, and he does not want to see us take our officer out of the Task Force. Mayor Farley indicated Council just wants to review it, prior to renewal. Chief Reynolds responded that City Council's role is to set policy, and tell him how much money his department has to spend, but not how to allocate his personnel. Mayor Farley responded that Council knows their role.

Economic Development Director Meador indicated there has been a resurgence in the Four-Lane US Rt. 50 organization, and she would like to see Salem onboard. Meador added that a four-lane Rt. 50 would be a great marketing tool. Councilman Morton indicated a previous Council had provided a resolution of support. Mayor Farley added that this has resurfaced because people contacted Senator Durbin, who is scheduled to meet with local officials in the near future. Dir. Meador indicated she is working with the property manager for the Family Video site to have it broken into two business sites. Dir. Meador indicated she would like to see a downtown beautification project, and would like to see more murals near community spaces. Councilman Koehler concurred, and added that he would like to see the "vault" flower boxes removed from downtown.

Councilwoman Troutt commented that, “this is all good information – now we just need to turn it into action”.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

***Motion was made by Councilwoman Troutt and seconded by Councilman Koehler to adjourn the special meeting at 10:25 pm. Roll call vote: AYES: Councilman Bringwald, Councilwoman Troutt, Councilman Morton, Councilman Koehler, Mayor Farley. NAYS: Motion carried.***

Bev Quinn, CMC  
City Clerk