

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

St. Louis, Michigan
February 6, 2024

The regular meeting of the Saint Louis City Council was called to order by Mayor Ralph R. Echtenaw on Tuesday February 6, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Council Members Present: Mayor Ralph R. Echtenaw, Fares E. Azzam, Mayor Pro Tem William R. Leonard, Kevin D. Palmer, Elizabeth A. Upton.

Council Members Absent: None

City Manager: Kurt Giles
City Clerk: Jamie Long
Police Chief: Richard Ramereiz

Others in Attendance: Mandy Thompson-resident, Richard Henry-resident, Brayden Kunkel-student, and Michael Mitchell-student.

Mayor Echtenaw led the Pledge of Allegiance.

City Council Minutes.

Moved by Upton, supported by Leonard, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on January 23, 2024. All ayes carried the motion.

Claims & Accounts.

City Council discussed the Claims & Accounts.

Moved by Upton, supported by Leonard, to approve the Claims & Accounts in the amount of \$272,263.73. All ayes carried the motion.

Monthly Board Minutes.

City Council discussed the January 2024 Monthly Board Minutes.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Upton, to receive the January 2024 Monthly Board Minutes and place on file. All ayes carried the motion.

Audience Recognition.

Richard Henry informed the council of his concern of poor water condition at 636 Eden Street. Henry explained that his daughter, Mandy Thompson, has had to replace the water heater three times in the course of about thirteen years. Henry has spoken to Utilities Director, Keith Risdon regarding this issue

previously. Henry brought pictures for the council to view of the damage he believes the water quality is causing to the hot water heaters.

Consent Agenda.

Mayor Echtenaw requested approval/receipt of Consent Agenda item “a.” as shown below:

- a. Payment to BS&A Software for Annual Service/Support Fee.

Moved by Upton, supported by Palmer, to approve Consent Agenda item “a” All ayes carried the motion.

Quote for DPW Dump Trailer.

Manager Giles requested approval of the quote for the DPW Dump Trailer from USA Trailer Sales in the amount of \$14,900.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Upton, to approve the quote for the DPW Dump Trailer from USA Trailer Sales in the amount of \$14,900. All ayes carried the motion.

Assessor’s Office Accessibility Policy.

Manager Giles requested members to approve the Assessor’s Office Accessibility Policy.

Assessor’s Office Accessibility Policy pursuant to PA 660 of 2018 MCL

211.10g(1)(c)

- The City of St. Louis and the City of Alma have a shared assessing agreement for assessing services.
- The Assessing Department has two full-time members to assist taxpayers: Katherine Roslund, Assessor (MMAO), and Hannah Post, Assessing Assistant (MCAO).
- The Assessing Department business hours are Monday – Friday 8:00am-5:00pm. Please see City holiday schedule for other closings that may impact office hours.
- A taxpayer may submit inquiries directly to Assessor Katherine Roslund at assessor@stlouismi.com or by phone 989-463-9514 or Hannah Post at hpost@myalma.org or by phone 989-463-9515. The estimated response time to questions is less than three (3) business days.

- A taxpayer may arrange a meeting with an Assessing Department team member for the purpose of discussing questions in-person by calling 989-463-9515.
- A taxpayer request for inspection or production of records maintained by the Assessing Department may be made by calling 989-463-9515. Information may be subject to the statutory requirements of FOIA.
- Assessment records may be obtained, free of charge, on BS&A and can be accessed on the City's website www.stlouismi.com.
 1. Go to www.stlouismi.com
 2. Click the "Government" drop-down and select "Assessor."
 3. Scroll down to the right of **Documents** and find the link to "Property Data, Assessing & Tax Information." Click link.
 4. Search by address/parcel number in the search box to locate information.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Leonard, supported by Upton to approve the Assessor's Office Accessibility Policy. All ayes carried the motion.

Personal Property Canvass Audit.

Manager Giles requested members to approve the Personal Property Canvass Audit Documents.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Leonard to approve the Personal Property Canvass Audit Documents. All ayes carried the motion.

Disabled Veterans Assessing Policy and Documents.

Manager Giles requested members to approve the Disabled Veterans Assessing Policy and Documents.

Moved by Upton, supported by Leonard, to approve the Disabled Veterans Assessing Policy and Documents. All ayes carried the motion.

Real Property Exemption Policy and Documents.

Manager Giles requested members to approve the Real Property Exemption Policy and Documents.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Palmer, supported by Azzam to approve the Real Property Exemption Policy and Documents. All ayes carried the motion.

Resolution 2024-02-Poverty Exemption.

The following preamble and resolution was offered by Upton and supported by Council Member Leonard.

WHEREAS, the adoption of guidelines for poverty exemptions is required of the City of St. Louis Council; and

WHEREAS, the principal residence of persons, who the Board of Review determines by reason of poverty to be unable to contribute to the public charge, is eligible for exemption in whole or in part from taxation under Public Act 390 of 1994 (MCL 211.7u); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to PA 390 of 1994, the City of Saint Louis, Gratiot County adopts the following guidelines for the Board of Review to implement. The guidelines shall include but not be limited to the specific income and asset levels of the claimant and all persons residing in the household, including any property tax credit returns, filed in the current or immediately preceding year;

To be eligible, all the following conditions must be met:

- 1) An applicant must own and occupy, as a homestead property, for which an exemption is requested.
- 2) An applicant must file Form 5737 Application for MCL 211.7u Poverty Exemption.
- 3) An applicant must file Form 5739 Affirmation of Ownership and Occupancy to Remain Exempt by Reason of Poverty.
- 4) An applicant must file all required additional documentation (such as federal/state income tax returns, including any property tax credit returns filed in the immediately preceding year or in the current year, with the assessor or board of review, or a signed *State Tax Commission form 4988, Poverty Exemption Affidavit*).
- 5) An applicant must produce a valid driver's license or other form of identification if requested.
- 6) An applicant must produce a deed, land contract, or other evidence of ownership of the property for which an exemption is requested, if requested.
- 7) An applicant must meet the federal poverty income guidelines as defined annually by the United States Office of Management and Budget.
- 8) An applicant must file an application for an exemption after January 1, but before the day prior to the last day of the board of review meeting.
- 9) If the property in question contains enough acreage that at least one or more buildable lots could be split from the main parcel under the land division act, the city will count the value of any additional parcel that could be split when calculating the applicant's total assets and that combined value shall not exceed the maximum total assets.
- 10) An applicant's total assets shall not be more than \$2,000. Please refer to MCL 211.7u for Income and Asset Test.
- 11) Fixed assets shall be limited to one house and one vehicle for the claimant and no house and one vehicle for each adult person residing with the claimant.

The following are the 2024 federal poverty income guidelines which are updated annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The annual allowable income includes income for all persons residing in the principal residence.

Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2024 Assessments

Size of Family Unit	Poverty Guidelines
1	\$14,580
2	\$19,720
3	\$24,860
4	\$30,000
5	\$35,140
6	\$40,280
7	\$45,420
8	\$50,560
For each additional person	\$5,140

The City of St. Louis will only grant full poverty exemptions.

PA 191 of 2023 amends the poverty exemption to allow local units to grant a 75% partial exemption, in addition to the previously allowed 100%, 50%, and 25%, without prior approval by the State Tax Commission.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the assessor and Board of Review shall follow the above stated policy and federal guidelines in granting or denying an exemption.

Ayes: Upton, Leonard, Azzam, Palmer, Echtenaw

Nays: None

Absent: None

Resolution declared adopted.

Resolution 2024-03-Maximum Asset Standards.

The following preamble and resolution was offered by Council Member Azzam and supported by Council Member Upton.

WHEREAS the adoption of the Maximum Asset Standards is required of the City Council; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to PA 390 of 1994 the City of St. Louis, Gratiot County states that the poverty exemption guidelines established by the governing body of the local assessing unit shall include an asset level test; and

WHEREAS the City of St. Louis adopts the following Maximum Asset Standards for a household to be eligible for a **POVERTY EXEMPTION**. The below asset levels **DO NOT** include the value of your homestead. (Per Tribunal ruling 08-13-97, Docket #236230, and the equity of the homestead should not be included within the asset test to be valid).

Combined assets to the total household may not exceed \$2,000. *Please refer to MCL 211.7u for Income and Asset Test information.*

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Review shall follow the above stated Maximum Asset Standards in granting or denying an exemption and that if your household assets exceed the above stated Maximum Asset Standards you are NOT eligible for a POVERTY EXEMPTION.

Ayes: Azzam, Upton, Leonard, Palmer, Echtenaw

Nays: None

Absent: None

Resolution Declared Adopted.

Resolution 2024-04-To Allow Residents to Protest in Writing.

In order to ease the burden on taxpayers, the assessor and the board of review and to ensure that all taxpayers have an equal opportunity to be heard by the board of review, City of St. Louis hereby resolves, according to provisions of MCL 211.30 (7) of the General Property Tax Act, that the board of review shall receive letters of protest regarding assessments from resident taxpayers from the first Tuesday in March until it adjourns from the public hearings for which it meets to hear such protests.

All notices of assessment change and all advertisements of board of review meetings are to include a statement that the resident taxpayers may protest by letter to the board.

The foregoing resolution was offered by City Council Member Leonard and supported by City Council Member Palmer.

Upon roll call vote, the following voted:

Ayes: Leonard, Palmer, Azzam, Upton, Echtenaw

Nays: None

Absent: None

Resolution Declared Adopted.

Resolution 2024-06-Medical Benefits Certification.

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Member Azzam, and supported by Member Leonard:

WHEREAS, 2011 Public Act 152 (the “Act”) was passed by the State Legislature and signed by the Governor on September 24, 2011;

WHEREAS, the Act contains three options for complying with the requirements of the Act;

WHEREAS, the three options are as follows:

- 1) Section 3 - “Hard Caps” Option - limits a public employer’s total annual health care costs for employees based on coverage levels, as defined in the Act;
- 2) Section 4 - “80%/20%” Option - limits a public employer’s share of total annual health care costs to not more than 80%. This option requires an annual majority vote of the governing body;
- 3) Section 8 - “Exemption” Option - a local unit of government, as defined in the Act, may exempt itself from the requirements of the Act by an annual 2/3 vote of the governing body;

WHEREAS, the City Council has decided to continue the 80%/20% option as its choice of compliance under the Act;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the City Council of the City of St. Louis elects to comply with the requirements of 2011 Public Act 152, the Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act, by adopting the 80%/20% option for the medical benefit plan coverage year July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.

Upon roll call vote, the following voted:

Ayes: Azzam, Leonard, Palmer, Upton, Echtenaw

Nays: None

Absent: None

Resolution Declared Adopted.

Approve USDA Grant Application.

Manager Giles requested members to authorize the Police Chief, Finance Director, and/or City Manager to execute and sign documents related to the pre-application submission, application and acceptance of Community Facility Loans and Grants (Equipment and Vehicles) and commit, as a first priority from City’s General Fund Balance Capital Assignment, the city share of match funds for the program to the extent needed for a new police vehicle. (commitment needed based on recent quotes with an approximate range of \$28,000 to \$31,000).

Discussion was held.

Moved by Upton, supported by Leonard, to authorize the Police Chief, Finance Director, and/or City Manager to execute and sign documents related to the pre-application submission, application and acceptance of Community Facility Loans and Grants (Equipment and Vehicles) and commit, as a first priority from City's General Fund Balance Capital Assignment, the city share of match funds for the program to the extent needed for a new police vehicle. (commitment needed based on recent quotes with an approximate range of \$28,000 to \$31,000). All ayes carried the motion.

Mayor/Council Availability Sessions.

Mayor Echtenaw requested members to consider and form a plan on Coffee With the Mayor/Council Members.

Discussion was held with suggestions given on dates, frequency, locations, and times.

Manager Giles suggested hosting the event along with the local representatives/senators, when they are in the St. Louis area.

Member Leonard suggests that this should be held monthly, not quarterly with two different members rotating.

City Manager Report.

Nothing to report.

City Clerk Report.

Nothing to report.

Police Chief Report.

Nothing to report.

Council Comments.

Member Leonard questioned the status of the Exxon Station and the empty lot that was previously Tony's Restaurant. Leonard had noticed some activity at the Exxon Station.

Member Azzam informed Chief Rameriez of a misprint in the Morning Sun article regarding the shooting.

Public Comments.

There were none.

Adjournment.

Moved by Leonard, supported by Azzam, to adjourn at 6:53 p.m. All ayes carried the motion.

Jamie Long, City Clerk