

City of Litchfield
120 E. Ryder, Litchfield, Illinois
Official Open Session Meeting Minutes
December 18, 2025
6:30 P.M.

Mayor Fleming called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Present on roll call were, Alderperson Sisson, Alderperson Sara Zumwalt, Alderperson Gerl, Alderperson Robbin Huffman, Alderperson Josh Hughes, Alderperson Bob Garcia, Alderperson Holloway, and Alderperson Ray Kellenberger. The mayor declared that a quorum was present.

Others Present: Breann Vazquez, City Administrator, Vickie Throne, City Clerk, Michael McGinley, City Attorney

Absent: None

Recognition of Visitors and Special Guest: Christy Crites. Engineer with Crawford, Murphy, Tilly

Presentation

Christy reported that she has extensive experience in designing and constructing our water plant. She began with the turbidity violation that occurred in October and explained the process and the public health implications. She explained the clarification process at the water plant, where heavy particles settle to the bottom. The water then goes through sand and granular activate carbon filters, followed by membrane filtration. The turbidity violation occurred after the filters, but the water was still safe to drink. Christy emphasized that the violation was due to a technicality, not a public health issue. Christy emphasized that the post-filter turbidity of 0.2 parts per million was well below the EPA limit of 0.3 parts per million. The boil order was issued out of an abundance of caution, not due to contamination. The city transitioned from chloramines to free chlorine due to system issues, with plans to revert back to chloramines by early January. City Administrator Breann Vazquez reported that the Village of Butler issued a notice this week to their customers and since we are the parent company, the EPA requires that we notify customers as well. Breann reported that the water bills being mailed out will have a sticker on them that will state important notice about your drinking water and it will have a link to a similar notice that has already been up on the City of Litchfield website. Alderperson Hughes asked what the purpose of the boil order was and what the problems of the plant are that need to be addressed. Christy again reported that the boil order was done out of an abundance of caution not due to a bad test result. City Administrator Breann Vazquez reported that she was on maternity leave at that time but kept in contact with Illinois Rural Water and the EPA who strongly encouraged the boil order due to concerns about chlorine dispersal. Christy again explained that Illinois Rural Water and the EPA missed the extra step that the city had in the flow of the water processing which helped to keep the levels well below the EPA limit. Christy explained that high turbidity can allow bacteria to grow, but it does not necessarily mean the water is contaminated. Alderperson Holloway asked about the smell and taste. Christy explained the free chlorine burn process and how it impacts the taste and color. She reported that the ammonia system had not been working, leading to the use of free chlorine. Christy reported that the ammonia system is being replaced, and the plan is to switch back to free chloramines in early January. Christy reported that Bill Grider is continuing to take test samples to make sure the water is safe. Christy

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explained that the areas that tend to have water sit in the lines longer do have more of the earthy musty smell and taste. Alderperson Hughes clarified that he could smell the chlorine in his shower when he turns it on, but when he goes to a restaurant on the west side of town, he gets the earthy must taste and smell in the drinks. Christy again stated that the areas where the water sits in the lines longer will have that issue. Bill Grider has gone out and flushed the lines in that area and that has helped with improving the taste and smell, but after a couple of days it returns. Christy reported that if you have dead ends in your lines, it will cause the issue with taste and smell. She is currently working with other towns to figure out how to prevent dead end lines by creating loops. Breann asked Christy if we could expect to see improvements within 24 to 48 hours after we stop the free burn process and we get back to the monochloramines and ammonia in January. Christy stated that it is all dependent on the temperatures and if we can go out and flush the system. We will also have to get the water out of the storage tanks. The perfect scenario would be for us to be able to flush the water if weather allows. Mayor Fleming asked if the initial system fails do we have a back up system ready to go should a similar problem happen again? Christy reported that some of the systems have redundancy and some do not due to it being cost prohibitive. Christy reiterated the importance of preventative maintenance as it will extend the life of equipment and making sure, we are not in a position where we cannot produce safe drinking water. Alderperson Holloway asked how old the current plant is. Christy was involved in the planning of this plant and reported that construction began in 2006, and it went online in March of 2009, and it was designed to last 50+ years with the proper maintenance. Christy reported that our city has a state-of-the-art plant. Alderperson Holloway asked what the financial impact of maintaining the water plant will be. CMT currently has a contract and part of that contract is to do a capital improvement plan. Most of the items on that plan could be done with a maintenance budget; there are a couple that require a higher investment to get them going. The plan right now is to get systems functional and then figure out how long we can go before we must do a major change. Christy believes it is best to build a program where you know how much maintenance money should be spent ever year. Administration looked back at last year's budget and maintenance at the water plant was listed at \$50,000.00. Christy reported that you cannot replace a pump for \$50,000.00. It is time for us to get to where we better understand what needs to be done, understand the assets that the city owns, and eventually we will get ahead, and we will not be fixing things after they fail. Breann reported that we plan to expand our maintenance budget and make sure we have the staff to keep up with the preventative maintenance. She is also recommending having a third party like CMT to do monthly visits ensuring that we are following protocols. Traditionally the budget has been carried over the same way for years. Our first priority is going to be taking care of the infrastructure and facilities that we have before expanding. Alderperson Garcia reported that he believes if we had completed preventative maintenance, we would not be in the situation that we are. Christy reported that is correct. Alderperson Kellenberger asked if we will have a large sum of money that will need to be spent over and above what has already been spent. Christy reported that everything on the list does not have to be done immediately. It will be a balancing act. Christy's long-term goal is that the plant be just as functional and capable as the day it went online. Breann reported that there will be some hefty items, but those are the ones that we will stagger. Breann does not want people to think that every water expenditure for the next 10 years is because something was not done properly. The plan is to get on a replacement schedule and to have professionals like CMT come alongside us and make sure we have a superintendent and assistant superintendent, multiple Class A operators. Breann reiterated that we

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have operators who have done great with adapting to these changes and are really diving in. Anytime Breann has visited the plant she sees them working on lines and investigating issues. Again, it is important to invest in preventative maintenance. Alderperson Kellenberger asked if the emergency fund that has been allotted still has a healthy balance and Breann indicate that we have ample reserve funds. Christy reported that staff has completed a tremendous amount of work and clean up since she first visited the plant. Alderperson Holloway reported that we have started selling water to other municipalities and would like to know how close we are to capacity. Christy reported that we are not at capacity. Breann reported that as we go through the steps and we received the full water plant study and we move on to a water distribution model, we will have Christy and her colleagues come back and explain this so that we can make informed decisions. Alderperson Garcia asked if Christy believes that the once the employees that the city has working now are properly trained, will they be able to do most of the preventative maintenance. Christy stated that as it stands right now, she would say no, because there are not enough employees. As it is now if the employee is outside the plant, there is no way for them to get an alarm to know that there is a problem in the plant. Christy does not believe there are enough staff to properly run three shifts. The focus currently with the number of staff we have now needs to be treating the water and making sure the water is safe. Her thoughts currently are that big maintenance is going to be a problem, because we do not have the manpower to do that. Breann reported that they are looking at having two class A operators and we need a maintenance person. Some of the maintenance on specific systems can be contracted. Alderperson Kellenberger asked if the study has been started or completed regarding how this will affect our water bills? Breann reported that the study is in the works and once they have the completed information finalized, they will present the draft result to Breann, the mayor, and the water liaison once they are ready. They will then have discussion with the department heads and the present the study to the city council before any decisions are made. Overall, Christy's recommendation is a capital improvement plan to address long-term maintenance needs and apply for low-interest loans. Mayor Fleming thanked Christy for doing a wonderful job and believes she has answered all our questions.

City Report:

Mayor Fleming wanted to say Merry Christmas to everyone. He reported that the city had the employee Christmas party this week and he wanted to recognize all city employees for going above and beyond.

Public Participation

None

Appointments:

None

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Other Business:

Aldersperson Gerl made a motion, seconded by Aldersperson Sisson, to approve minutes from the regular meeting held on December 4, 2025.

Mayor Fleming directed a roll call vote.

Aye: Garcia, Sisson, Gerl, Zumwalt, Huffman, Kellenberger, Holloway, Hughes

Nay: None.

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion carried.

Aldersperson Huffman made a motion, seconded by Aldersperson Gerl to approve the expenditure report and payroll report for the current period.

Mayor Fleming directed a roll call vote.

Aye: Sisson, Gerl, Zumwalt, Huffman, Hughes, Garcia, Holloway, Kellenberger

Nay: None.

Absent: None.

Abstain: None

Motion carried.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

Finance

Aldersperson Zumwalt made a motion, seconded by Sisson, approving an ordinance ascertaining the total amount budgeted for all corporate purposes legally made and to be collected from the tax levy of this fiscal year, beginning on the first day of May 2025, ending on the 30th day of April, 2026, and levying a tax for the same on all property subject to taxation within the City of Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois, as the same is assessed and equalized for state and county purposes for the current year.

Discussion: Mayor Fleming reported that we did not have to have a truth and taxation meeting and wanted to know the reason for that. City Administrator Breann Vazquez reported that we are not increasing taxes more that 105% over what was levied last year, so we do not have to have a truth and taxation hearing. Last year, our final total city levy was \$1,760,747.00 and this year it is \$1,846,887.00. Last year we had a tax rate of 1.39 this year, we have a tax rate of 1.35. The EAV did increase by ten million, which is a healthy increase. Aldersperson Hughes asked what

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we should expect this to do to people's property taxes for the portion they get billed from the city? Breann reported that since the tax rate is decreasing a little bit, we are hoping that they will end up paying about the same in city taxes as they did last year. The EAV did increase by ten million and most of that increase is due to new developments that we had, which means you are spreading out your tax base, however, the caveat to that is if your home value was assessed higher than last year for some reason or another, then they would be going up proportionally. So, if you put on a garage or an addition your taxes to the city and every other taxing body will go up. It is all proportionate with how they assess you.

Mayor Fleming directed a roll call vote.

Aye: Zumwalt, Kellenberger, Sisson, Gerl, Hughes, Huffman, Garcia, Holloway

Nay: None.

Absent: None.

Abstain: None.

Motion carried.

Lake Department

Aldersperson Huffman made a motion, seconded by Aldersperson Gerl to approve an ordinance approving a lease between the City of Litchfield and James Chambers an Emily Brauer for 118 Westlake Trail.

Discussion: Mayor Fleming that this is just routine maintenance because they needed to extend their lease to match a mortgage.

Mayor Fleming directed a roll call vote.

Aye: Hughes, Holloway, Zumwalt, Huffman, Sisson, Gerl, Garcia, Kellenberger

Nay: None.

Absent: None.

Abstain: None.

Motion carried.

Executive Session

A Motion to Enter into Executive Session, as allowed under the Illinois Open Meetings Act, as found in Chapter 5 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes, Section 120, to address these certain and restricted items:

1. "The setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the public body." (5ILCS 120/2(2)(6))
2. "Discussion of minutes of meeting lawfully closed under this Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06." (5ILCS 120/2(2)(C)(21))

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Aldersperson Kellenberger made a motion, seconded by Aldersperson Gerl to enter executive session at 7:23 p.m.

Mayor Fleming directed a roll call vote.

Aye: Zumwalt, Sisson, Gerl, Huffman, Hughes, Garcia, Kellenberger, Holloway.

Nay: None.

Absent: None.

Abstain: None.

Motion carried.

Regular Session resumed at 7:52 p.m.

Adjournment

Having no further business Aldersperson Kellenberger made a motion seconded by Aldersperson Gerl, to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Mayor Fleming directed a roll call vote.

Aye: Zumwalt, Sisson, Gerl, Huffman, Hughes, Garcia, Kellenberger, Holloway

Nay: None.

Absent: None.

Abstain: None.

Motion carried.

Submitted by: Vickie Throne

Attest:



Vickie Throne
City Clerk

Approved:



Jacob Fleming
Mayor

