

OTTAWA PORT DISTRICT  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF APRIL 21, 2017

ROLL CALL

Keith Conrad called a regular meeting of the Port District to order at City Hall on April 21, 2017 at 8:00 a.m. with the following board members present: Keith Conrad, William Franklin, Jr., Mark Stoudt, Katie Troccoli and Charles Sheridan. Also present were Reed Wilson, Mike Sutfin, David Noble, Rich Burton and Thomas Murphy of Illinois Railnet, LLC.

MINUTES

Minutes from January 20, 2017 meeting were presented and approved by unanimous vote following a motion by William Franklin, Jr. and second by Mark Stoudt.

COMMUNICATIONS

One bill from Diane Stelken for the website and another for the domain were received.

TREASURERS REPORT

The financial report including the bill from Diane Stelken was approved on motion of Charlie Sheridan and second by William Franklin Jr.

MEMBER REPORTS

John commented that he believes use of technology and signage could assist with citizen complaints about rail traffic. Several members commented on the future need of a parking garage.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Boyd Palmer updated on recent developments in the area:

- A new business, Dermatology and Plastic Surgery Associates, has moved into the old Grieves property and will be opening May 23 due to demand from this area at other locations.
- The next Business after Hours will be at the local campus of the Morris Hospital, located in the former Resin building.
- There is construction on Columbus Street adding more green space and some downtown facade work is being completed.
- On May 27 there will be the Starved Rock Brewfest, featuring thirty breweries.
- There has been interest for a business tenants in the Southside call center.
- A new children's boutique will be opening downtown soon.
- There has been restoration on the building at corner of Jefferson and Canal Street.
- 725 LaSalle St. is unoccupied but a new tenant expects an October opening.
- There is a new joint chamber and city video.

Mike Sutfin reported on the closing of Avant Garden. Mike provided updates regarding the City of Ottawa reaching out to the Corp of Engineers as to various projects including removing debris at the aqueduct and helping build shoreline protection at Allen Park.

## OLD BUSINESS

David Noble advised that the Central School cleanup is progressing slowly. David introduced Thomas Murphy of Illinois Railnet, LLC and discussion ensued regarding his company's current business in the Ottawa area and future cooperation with the port district.

Keith explained the port district's current role in economic development and the interest of being part of a project that facilitates better transportation within the area. Keith also noted that local residents' frustration with the current traffic congestion isn't a result of amount of trains passing through town, but the switching comes from trains passing through.

Thomas continued about the current demand for rail traffic and the trend for it to increase, which would result in more switching of cars and subsequent traffic congestion. Most of the increased rail traffic is due to increased silica sand shipping which is not expected to peak for another 5 years. In 2015 there were 66,000 railcar loads, 80,000 in 2016, and 2017 is on pace to see 100,000 loads out of this area. Local rail traffic also involves CSX, another rail entity.

Thomas noted that eighteen million dollars was recently invested in infrastructure improvements to the rail between Ottawa and Montgomery. He discussed that safety is a top priority for Illinois Railnet. There was only one derailment in 2017, down from 15 in 2016, 25 in 2015, and 40 in 2014. Personal injuries are also down from 1 in 2016, 4 in 2015, and 5 in 2014. Thomas also noted that Railnet continues to strive to hire people within the local area.

Discussion ensued regarding the possible excessive use of the train horns. Thomas explained that current Federal Railroad Administration standards maintain that a train's horn has to sound while the train is passing through the entire crossing, with the first horn sounding in advance at one quarter mile away from the crossing. As no train in Ottawa goes above ten miles per hour, this results in a train horn sounding for an extended length of time.

Katie noted the length of time that the trains block the intersection is also excessive, resulting in irate motorists. Thomas noted that as long as the train is moving, it can block an intersection for as long as needed, although a train cannot be actually stopped in an intersection except for in an emergency.

Thomas finished his discussion with noting that he has spoken with U.S. Silica and also CSX and everyone is in agreement that they are willing to work with each other and the port district to resolve switching issues in the area. David Noble suggested that work needs to be complete in advance of seeking grant money. Such work includes detailed drawings, construction specifications, a letter of intent as to need right of way, and commitment letters from the rail providers.

## ADJOURN

There being no further reports or business, the meeting was adjourned at about 9:30 a.m. upon motion of William Franklin, Jr. and second by Charles Sheridan and unanimous oral vote. The next regular meeting of the district will be October 21, 2017.