

APPROVED MINUTES  
WATKINS CITY COUNCIL  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 2021

Mayor Rowan called the regular meeting to order at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Chris Rowan, Tootz Tschumperlin, Sue Unterberger, Marc Wirz, Brenda Carlson arrived at 7:03 p.m.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Others present: Duane Peterson, Jeff Hilsgen, Kent Louwagie, Public Works Director Steve Geislinger, Sharon Schmitz, Ryan Janisch, Dave Hokanson, Assistant Clerk Jeanette Neidhardt, Clerk Deb Kramer, Pool Manager Kris Butterfass

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE THE AGENDA, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Items on the Consent Agenda: minutes of July 8<sup>th</sup> regular meeting, July financial report, Resolution No. 2021-22, Resolution Accepting Donations, Resolution No. 2021-23, Resolution Approving Transfer of Funds, and delinquent water bills for shut off.

Public Forum – none

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF THE AMBULANCE BILLS AS PRESENTED, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Watkins Ambulance Service Chief Jeff Hilsgen asked for approval to upgrade the service's defibrillator at a cost of \$16,785.48. Councilor Carlson arrived at this time. The service's medical director has recommended this upgrade.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE THE DEFIBRILLATOR UPGRADE, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Sharon Schmitz requested to block off parking from Bud's Bar up to Ertl Hardware for the Bud's Bar bike run Saturday, August 14<sup>th</sup>.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ALLOW THE STREET TO BE BLOCKED OFF, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Ryan Janisch noted he would like to bring a 12' x 16' shed onto his property in the mobile home park. The building currently has sheet steel siding with a metal roof. Wirz noted that City ordinance requires all accessory structures exceeding 120 sq. ft. to match the exterior of the principal building on the lot. A metal roof is allowed, but it has to be a standing seam metal roof system. Council advised the building must have residential siding and shingled roof or a standing seam metal roof to be compliant with the ordinance.

City engineer Kent Louwagie discussed the proposed pedestrian and bike trail from Glenshire Estates. The city did apply for funding in January but was not selected. MnDOT recommended including the School Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street South sidewalk in the application. MnDOT also had concerns about potential need for additional right-of-way, impacts to utilities along the route and wetland impacts. MnDOT recommended completing some preliminary engineering to address these concerns before reapplying. Kent noted Bolton and Menk estimates its fees for the preliminary design at \$25,000. This wouldn't be exceeded without prior authorization. An alternate route starting at the east end of the platted townhomes and extending south to Highway 55 was looked at. A representative from MnDOT thought this would be a better route rather than starting at the entrance to Glenshire Estates. Council reviewed both routes and didn't feel either of them were a satisfactory option as they would prefer to stay off highway right-of-way. Carlson questioned spending \$25,000 if the city isn't happy with the route. Wirz noted he tried to contact the party that owns the field the city would like to get access through but he has not returned any calls or messages. Wirz will attempt to contact the land owner again. No action was taken.

Kent presented a Preliminary Engineering Report of the main lift station and forcemain rehabilitation and replacement. The main lift station was constructed in 1982. It consists of a wet well for raw wastewater and a dry well for centrifugal pumps and valves. The wet well is showing obvious signs of weathering and deterioration. The dry well appears to be weeping ground water at the base of the structure. The lift stations pumps, valving and lift station controls were replaced in 2004. The pumps and check valves have required significant maintenance over the last several years. There is an existing propane generator on site, installed in 1982. This has not been problematic, but is near the end of its useful life too. The original control building, which was decommissioned when the lift station was built, still exists. The roof is failing and groundwater is constantly present in the lower level. This structure presents a safety concern. A large mound of earth to the east of the control building covers an abandoned slurry tank. The north fork of County Ditch 20 passes through the site, generally along the north and west sides of the parcel. The existing forcemain, constructed in 1982, is 10-inch diameter ductile iron pipe (DIP) that extends east from the lift station along the south side of Highway 55, then north along the section line to the treatment ponds. The forcemain is about 3.5 miles long. The forcemain has failed about five times over the last 10-15 years. When the pipe failures were excavated, it was noted that the pipe appeared to be bedded against a rock, which might have caused additional stress on the pipe. The concrete control structures at the wastewater treatment ponds needs replacement as well. The life span on the lift station and forcemain is 40 to 60 years. Submersible pumps would be used in any of the proposed scenarios. The city has only exceeded its pumping capacity one time, in 2015, following a heavy rain. Kent noted it would be designed with the same pumping capacity. Three alternatives were proposed for lift station improvements: 1. Complete design and replacement of the lift station with new wet well, submersible pumps and valve/meter vault. 2. Utilize existing wet well structure, install submersible pumps, construct valve/meter vault. 3. Rehabilitate existing structures and replace dry well pumps. The following recommended improvements are included in all three options: demolish and remove the abandoned control building, replace all lift station process piping, valves, electrical and control panels, replace the backup generator, replace entire forcemain and replace the pond control structures. The following chart shows estimates of each alternative:

	Lift Station	Forcemain	Total
Alternative 1	\$1,067,040	\$2,122,610	\$3,189,650
Alternative 2	\$911,520	\$2,122,610	\$3,034,130
Alternative 3	\$777,600	\$2,122,610	\$2,900,210

Carlson asked about timeline. Kent noted if the city felt it was urgent, it could bond and move forward. There are funding programs the city could apply for through MN Public Facilities Authority (PFA). An application and report would need to be submitted by March 2022. The city would then be looking at 2023 construction. PVC pipe would be used for forcemain replacement. Carlson asked if the city could apply for both PFA funds and Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) funds. Kent noted all funding options would be explored. Kent noted PFA funds would likely be loan rather than grant dollars. Kent noted the next step would be to look at all funding options.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ACCEPT THE SHERIFF'S REPORT, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Deputy Defries hasn't been able to make contact with the party regarding the chickens.

Council reviewed Resolution No. 2021-24, A Resolution Vacating an Alley off of 4<sup>th</sup> Street North Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §412.851.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2021-24, A RESOLUTION VACATING AN ALLEY OFF OF 4<sup>TH</sup> STREET NORTH PURSUANT TO MINNESOTA STATUTES §412.851, SECONDED BY CARLSON. ON A ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES: CARLSON, WIRZ, UNTERBERGER, ROWAN. NAYS: NONE. TSCHUMPERLIN ABSTAINED. MOTION CARRIED.

Kramer reported the city received its first payment of \$50,421 of the American Rescue Plan Act funds. The second half will be paid in 2022. These funds must be obligated by 12/31/24 and spent by 12/31/26.

Council agreed to have Justice Walker with Mid-MN Development Commission attend a meeting to review the ordinance updates as drafted. Council called for a special meeting on September 9th at 6 p.m. to meet with Justice and review.

EDA update – The board is offering the vacant lot on Central Avenue North to an adjacent property owner. Discussion was held on splitting the lot between two adjacent property owners. Kramer noted that may not be able to be done as it would create two non-conforming lots. The board is also looking to advertise the townhome lots in Glenshire Estates.

Planning Commission update – Mike Klein has submitted an application for a variance from the required front yard setback. A vacant lot in Faber's 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition has been surveyed and split between two adjacent property owners. The board recommended the appointment of Michelle Garmon to the board. One vacancy still exists.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPOINT MICHELLE GARMON TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Mandy's Family Hair Care on Central Avenue North requested a temporary parking spot in front of her business during the paving of the parking lot. With the restaurant traffic on Central Avenue and the parking lot closed off, there is no convenient parking for her clients. Discussion followed.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO ALLOW A TEMPORARY PARKING SPOT ON CENTRAL AVENUE NORTH FOR MANDY'S FAMILY HAIR CARE, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Watkins Fire Department member Daniel Waldorf submitted his resignation from the department effective August 9, 2021.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF DANIEL WALDORF FROM THE WATKINS FIRE DEPARTMENT, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE THE REQUEST FROM ST. ANTHONY CHURCH FOR A TEMPORARY ON-SALE LIQUOR LICENSE FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2021, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Council called for a special meeting to be held Wednesday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. to review and act on the 2022 levy and budget.

Extra hours for the 2021 law enforcement contract were discussed. Council agreed it was not necessary to extend this into 2022.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN NOT TO EXTEND EXTRA LAW ENFORCEMENT HOURS TO 2022, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Resolution No. 2021-25, certifying delinquent water and sewer charges, was presented.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2021-25, RESOLUTION CERTIFYING UNPAID CHARGES, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

Discussion was held on IT services. Kramer noted she would like to have someone consistent to contact when there are technology issues. Council advised Kramer to get a quote from Quantum Data Systems for backup with a server, without a server and for support services. Wirz will contact IT Solutions and request the same.

Public Works Director Geislinger noted there have been some issues with the telemetry system for the water treatment plant.

Watkins and Fridley were selected as finalists for 2021 City of the Year by the MN Real Estate Journal. The city worked with developers to get a 20-unit, market rate apartment building in the city. The city of Fridley was awarded the honor. Since the Watkins project, the developers have been finding success in other Meeker County cities to build more housing.

Mayor Rowan noted the AED was installed outside City Hall. LP Corp. has donated funds to purchase another unit that will be installed near the new 20-unit apartment building.

Council discussed the parking issue on Meeker Avenue North. No action was taken at this time.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF THE BILLS AS PRESENTED, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

The next regular meeting is Thursday, September 9<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m.

Mayor Rowan closed the meeting at 8:43 p.m. for staff evaluations per MN Statute §13D.05, subds. 1(d), 3(a) for Deb Kramer, Jeanette Neidhardt, Steve Geislinger, Viri Liebrenz, Bella Butterfass and Kris Butterfass. Viri and Bella were absent.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO REOPEN THE MEETING, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Meeting reopened at 8:54 p.m.

Council noted city employees were reviewed and all employees are doing an excellent job.

Wage negotiations – Kramer, Neidhardt, Geislinger and Liebrenz requested a 4% increase for 2022 and 2023. The pool manager wages will be discussed at a later date. Wirz noted he felt 4% was a reasonable request considering wages and the economy now.

MOTION BY UNTERBERGER TO APPROVE A 4% WAGE INCREASE FOR 2022 AND ANOTHER 4% FOR 2023 FOR STEVE GEISLINGER, DEB KRAMER, VIRI LIEBRENZ AND JEANETTE NEIDHARDT, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Kris noted she would be interested in taking a lifeguard management course and possibly First Aid and CPR. Council noted all pool staff wages need to be reviewed. Council noted they would love to have Kris back next season if she wants to return.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ADJOURN, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Submitted by

Deb Kramer  
Clerk

ATTEST:

Chris Rowan  
Mayor