

APPROVED MINUTES  
WATKINS CITY COUNCIL  
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Chris Rowan, Tootz Tschumperlin, Marc Wirz, Brenda Carlson  
MEMBERS ABSENT: Sue Unterberger

Others: Jody Bauer, Shawny Kramer, Steve Geislinger, Stephanie Eder, Duane Peterson, Randy Kramer, Deputy Clerk Sarah Jacobsen-Krone, Clerk Deb Kramer

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

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

Items on the Consent Agenda: November 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and December 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting minutes, November financial report, Resolution No. 2024-34 Resolution Accepting Donations, 2025 council meeting schedule, delinquent water bills for shut off.

Public forum – none

Ambulance service – it was noted that the revenue didn't get deposited until December so it is not showing on the transaction report.

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

The service has a Certificate of Deposit of approximately \$107,000 maturing December 14<sup>th</sup>. The service would like to cash in and deposit in the new ambulance fund. There is \$36,000 in a savings account and with approval tonight, \$30,000 will be transferred from operations to the New Ambulance Fund. With the state EMS aid coming the end of December they should have enough to cover the cost of the new ambulance. Jody thought the cost of the new ambulance was about \$283,000, less trade-in of the current vehicle.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO CASH IN CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT MATURING DECEMBER 14, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Transferring the ambulance operations checking account to city staff was discussed. City staff would be handling banking deposits and paying bills instead of the ambulance service treasurer. Jody noted the treasurer receives \$400/month for the duties. This amount would be decreased accordingly if some of the duties are taken over by city staff.

MOTION BY WIRZ FOR CITY STAFF TO TAKE OVER OPERATIONS CHECKING, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Truth in Taxation discussion was opened at 7:05 p.m. Mayor Rowan noted the proposed General Fund levy for taxes payable in 2025 remains flat at \$318,204. The overall proposed levy for taxes payable in 2025 is \$524,452. This is a decrease of \$37,548 (approx. 6.6%) from 2024 taxes payable. The General Fund proposed expenses for 2025 are \$863,356. This is an increase of \$66,538 (about 8.35%) over 2024 budget. Although some categories will see decreases, there are increases in staff wages, benefits and training, building repair, law enforcement, and legal fees. General Fund budgeted revenue is proposed at \$810,704. Down about \$4,600 from 2024 budget, mainly due to conservative budgeting.

Mayor Rowan opened the floor for public comment. There was no public present for the truth in taxation discussion. Mayor Rowan closed the public comment period.

Ambulance Chief Jody Bauer reported one member has reached retirement status (15 years-service). The member is not retiring, but eligible for payout. Once a member reaches retirement status, they can remain on the service and receive an annual payment of \$1,300.00.

The ambulance retirement funds are held at Citizens Bank MN. Wirz suggested looking at investing with the state program for volunteer ambulance services.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE RETIREMENT DISBURSEMENT, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

The EMS state aid payment was discussed. Jody noted there are a lot of things it could be used for. The new ambulance being one of them. The service also has about \$15,082 in Public Safety Aid funds to spend that was received from the state last year.

The quarterly meeting with ambulance officers will be changed to January, April, July and October to align with the quarterly reports that are presented to council. The 2025 January meeting will be skipped due to the meeting that was held tonight. Jody also noted that WCCO TV News reached out wanting to interview rural ambulances about the EMS crisis and one-time aid funding coming from the state. Jody and Mayor Rowan will meet with them if they are still interested.

2025 budget and levy were reviewed. Kramer noted the 2024 estimate was updated to better align with the year-end projections. Kramer noted the updates made to the 2025 proposed budgeted. Increases were made to General Fund proposed disbursements in clerical wages/benefits and training, general government buildings, and streets and highways capital outlay.

MOTION MADE BY WIRZ TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2024-35, RESOLUTION ADOPTING FINAL LEVY, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-35

CITY OF WATKINS

MEEKER COUNTY, MINNESOTA

RESOLUTION ADOPTING FINAL TAX LEVY, COLLECTIBLE IN 2025

Be it resolved by the city council of the City of Watkins, Meeker County, Minnesota, that the following sums of money be levied for the current year, collectible in 2025, upon the taxable property in the City of Watkins, for the following purposes:

General Fund	\$318,204.00
Economic Development Tax Abatement-Hilltop Health Care Center	\$9,437.00
Economic Development Tax Abatement-Watkins Leased Housing LLC	\$11,611.00
Economic Development Authority Fund	\$10,000.00
\$4,050,000 G.O. Refunding Bonds, Series 2019A	\$175,200.00

The city clerk is hereby instructed to transmit a certified copy of this resolution to the county auditor of Meeker County, Minnesota.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2024-36, RESOLUTION ADOPTING FINAL BUDGET, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Lift station update – work is substantially complete. The new lift station and standby generator are online and operational. The contract will be closed out in 2025 after the punch list is complete and the turf has been accepted. Public Works Director Geislinger noted there were some issues with the flow meters, but they are operating much better now. Geislinger will confirm they are working properly before final payment is made. Pay application #8 from Geislinger and Sons in the amount of \$20,725.04 was recommended for payment by the engineer.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE PAY APPLICATION #8 FROM GEISLINGER AND SONS FOR \$20,725.04, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Sheriff's Department monthly report – Deputy Sandstrom was not present.

2025 Fee Schedule was reviewed. The cannabis fees need to be updated as the city can only charge a certain amount depending on what the business is. **Initial fees** would be: Retailer - \$500.00, Mezzobusiness - \$500.00, Low Potency Hemp Edible Retailer - \$125.00, Medical Cannabis Combination with Retail - \$500.00. **Renewal fees** would be: Retailer \$1,000.00, Microbusiness - \$1,000.00, Mezzobusiness - \$1,000.00, Low Potency Hemp Edible Retailer - \$125.00, Medical Cannabis Combination with Retail - \$1,000.00. Some licenses issued by the state cannot be charged a fee by a city.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 2024-11, ORDINANCE ADOPTING 2025 FEE SCHEDULE, WITH CHANGES OUTLINED ABOVE, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

Council reviewed the final draft of the cannabis and hemp businesses ordinance. This ordinance would regulate all cannabis and hemp businesses in the city.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 2024-12, CHAPTER 114, CANNABIS AND HEMP BUSINESSES, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing December 4<sup>th</sup> to amend Article XX, M-1 Industrial District, Section 20.02, Uses Requiring Conditional Use Permits, to add cannabis and hemp businesses as a use requiring a conditional use permit. There was no public comment at the hearing. The commission recommended the amendment to the council as proposed.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 2024-13, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF WATKINS ZONING ORDINANCE, ARTICLE XX, SECTION 20.02, USES REQUIRING A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT, ADDING CANNABIS AND HEMP BUSINESSES, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Council advised staff to check into Mid-MN Development Commission's energy efficiency and conservation strategies grant program for possible energy audits on city buildings.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2024-37, RESOLUTION APPROVING TRANSFER OF \$150,000 FROM GENERAL FUND TO CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS FUND, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Small box variety stores – There will be a hearing of the Planning Commission December 26<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. at City Hall for the purpose of amending the zoning ordinance to regulate small box variety stores. Three options were presented, based on discussion from the December 3<sup>rd</sup> work session. Option 1 would be the least restrictive. Options 2 and 3 have added regulations, with option 3 being the most restrictive. Option 3 includes a population threshold. The initial trigger would require a population of 3,500 in the city where one conditional use permit (CUP) could then be applied for. One additional CUP may be issued for each 5,000 additional residents of the city over the 3,500 initial population threshold. All three options would prohibit small box variety stores in all zoning districts except the M-1 Industrial District, which would require a conditional use permit for the use in that district.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPOINT MARC WIRZ TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND DUANE PETERSON TO THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS FOR THREE-YEAR TERMS EFFECTIVE 1/1/25, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE ST. ANTHONY CHURCH ON-SALE TEMPORARY LIQUOR LICENSE REQUEST FOR FEBRUARY 8-9 EVENT AT CHURCH, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE WATKINS LIONS CLUB ON-SALE TEMPORARY LIQUOR LICENSE REQUEST FOR FEBRUARY 15 EVENT AT SKATING RINK, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE WATKINS LIONS CLUB ON-SALE TEMPORARY LIQUOR LICENSE REQUEST FOR MARCH 1 EVENT AT VILLAGE HALL, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

LP Watkins has submitted 3 variance requests that will require only one publication, mailing and hearing. Council approved to charge only one fee.

Council approved for the deputy clerk to attend a meeting in Litchfield December 20<sup>th</sup> regarding MDH “wellness” funds available in 2025.

Geislinger reported the mower purchased in 2023 hasn’t been a very good machine and requested approval to trade up to the same model but with 4-wheel drive. Wirz felt going with a 4-wheel drive mower would be well worth the extra cost. After trade-in, the cost for a 4-wheel drive model would be \$11,651.46.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE A JOHN DEERE 1550 4-WHEEL DRIVE MOWER FOR \$11,651.46, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Geislinger requested approval to purchase new cameras for sewer mains and services. This would be a cost share with the city of Eden Valley. Each city’s cost would be around \$8,000. The city’s current camera (200 ft.) is getting wore out and the vision is poor. The city might be able to sell it. The new camera would extend 300 ft. and is a more rigid camera. The city does have a component to trace above ground. There is an option for a smaller camera for services and also for a sonde that could be used with the jetter. Geislinger requested approval for all 3 items. Eden Valley had their meeting prior to the representative showing the equipment and giving a quote so if it’s ordered after 12/31, the price would go up about \$250 for each city.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF ALL 3 ITEMS AS COST SHARE WITH EDEN VALLEY, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Geislinger noted some ceiling tiles upstairs at the Village Hall fell in. He noted the old siren and control box are the source of the problem. A crane would be needed to remove the old siren and the steel roof would need to be repaired. The estimated cost on getting the crane in is about \$2,000. When they were in the attic, they also found that the insulation is very poor, with no insulation in some areas. There should be 18 inches of insulation. KUE Contractors is working on a quote. The insulation could be done anytime but the roof would need to wait until spring.

Council approved for Geislinger and Peters to attend MN Rural Water Association MNWARN meeting December 17<sup>th</sup> in St. Cloud. There is no cost to attend.

Mayor Rowan noted this was Councilor Marc Wirz's last regular meeting. Rowan thanked Marc for his service to the city. Marc was appointed July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to fill a vacated seat and has served since then.

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

The next regular meeting will be Thursday, January 9<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ADJOURN THE MEETING, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Submitted by

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Deb Kramer, Clerk

ATTEST:

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Chris Rowan, Mayor