

APPROVED MINUTES  
WATKINS CITY COUNCIL  
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2023

Mayor Rowan called the regular meeting to order at 7:03 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, Kent Louwagie, Duane Peterson, Ken & Laura Schlangen, Deputy Sandstrom, Deputy Clerk Sarah Jacobsen-Krone, Clerk Deb Kramer, Public Works Director Steve Geislinger.

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

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

Items on Consent Agenda: minutes of November 9<sup>th</sup> regular meeting and December 6<sup>th</sup> special meeting, November financial report, Resolution No. 2023-39, Resolution Accepting Donations, Resolution No. 2023-40, Resolution Approving Transfer of Funds, 2024 council meeting schedule and delinquent water bills for shut off.

Public Forum – none.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF THE AMBULANCE SERVICE BILLS AS PRESENTED, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

The ambulance service treasurer position will go back to being paid from the ambulance fund.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ACCEPT THE MEEKER COUNTY SHERIFF'S REPORT, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE THE WATKINS LIONS CLUB TEMPORARY ON-SALE LIQUOR LICENSE REQUEST FOR FEBRUARY 17, 2024 EVENT AT SKATING RINK, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE THE TEMPORARY ON-SALE LIQUOR LICENSE REQUEST FROM ST. ANTHONY PARISH FOR FEBRUARY 10-11, 2024 EVENT AT PARISH CENTER, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPOINT FRANK EDER TO PLANNING COMMISSION AND MARC WIRZ TO BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS FOR TERMS FROM 1/1/24 TO 1/1/27, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Truth in Taxation discussion was opened at 7:10 p.m. Ken and Laura Schlangen asked about the increase in their valuation. Kramer explained the meeting to discuss valuation is in the spring. Homes have been selling at higher values which causes values in general to increase and then the property tax can increase as well. The value for pay 2024 is set. There will be a notification sent in the spring for values for pay 2025. There being no further public comment, Mayor Rowan closed the public comment period.

The 2024 budget was reviewed. Kramer noted some changes to the 2023 estimated and 2024 proposed receipts and disbursements. There was a reduction in the November tax settlement due to the Tax Court reducing CenterPoint Energy property values for tax years 2019-2023. The city proposed to levy an additional \$33,245 for pay 2024 to help recover some of that loss.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2023-41, RESOLUTION ADOPTING FINAL LEVY, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-41  
CITY OF WATKINS  
MEEKER COUNTY, MINNESOTA  
RESOLUTION ADOPTING FINAL TAX LEVY, COLLECTIBLE IN 2024

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 2024, 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	\$11,411.00
Economic Development Tax Abatement-Watkins Leased Housing LLC	\$13,940.00
CenterPoint Energy Abatement	\$33,245.00
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.

This foregoing resolution was adopted this 14<sup>th</sup> day of December 2023 on a motion by Councilor Wirz seconded by Councilor Carlson. Motion carried.

Christopher Rowan, Mayor

ATTEST: (SEAL)

Debra Kramer, Clerk

MOTION BY CARLSON TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2023-42, RESOLUTION ADOPTING FINAL BUDGET, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

City Engineer Kent Louwagie reported the lift station work is wrapping up for the season. Geislinger mentioned possible relocation of the current generator to the reservoir. Pay application No. 2 from Geislinger & Sons for \$571,751.33 was presented to the council for approval. Bolton & Menk has recommended payment.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE GEISLINGER AND SONS PAY APPLICATION NO. 2 FOR \$571,751.33, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Hearing for a Nuisance Ordinance violation at 130 Cedar Avenue North was held. Property owner Lance Smallwood was not present. A final notice to abate the nuisance and giving him an opportunity to be heard was posted at the property on November 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Smallwood has made no contact with City Hall or the Sheriff's Office regarding the matter. Geislinger noted the city doesn't have the equipment to remove the concrete pile and a contractor would need to be hired. If the charges go unpaid, it would be assessed to the owner's taxes. Kramer will follow up with the city attorney on procedure.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2023-43, RESOLUTION ADOPTING NOTICE OF ABATEMENT, WITH NUISANCE TO BE ABATED ON DECEMBER 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2023 AT 10:00 A.M., SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Council reviewed a proposed ordinance amendment to Chapter 72, Parking Regulations. The amendment would allow for a snow emergency to be declared and vehicles in violation could then be towed from any city street, avenue, alley or other public way in the city. Notification of the emergency would be put out on the digital sign, Facebook page, city website and Code Red. During the emergency, any vehicle in violation may be immediately removed and impounded by a person/entity designated by

City Council. Wirz noted Custom Towing would tow and take care of storage and collecting fees. A final draft of the amendment will be presented for approval at the January 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Council reviewed a Letter of Intent from Legacy Building Solutions to render project shop drawings and calculations for the roof over the skating rink and issue stamped drawings for bidding. The fee for their services is \$15,000. The Watkins Lions Club has donated funds for this expense.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE THE LETTER OF INTENT WITH LEGACY BUILDING SOLUTIONS FOR THE RINK PROJECT, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Planning Commission update – The board recommended to the Board of Adjustments the granting of two variance applications; one at 401 Central Ave N and 446 Central Ave N. Lynn Kramer is looking at options to possibly build a new home. The board recommended to the council to adopt an ordinance putting a moratorium on chain dollar store developments. This would allow the city time to study and/or hold hearings to gather information to consider official controls. The moratorium can't exceed one year from the effective date.

MOTION BY CARLSON FOR A MORATORIUM TO AUTHORIZE A STUDY OR HOLD HEARINGS TO GATHER INFORMATION FOR WHAT'S BEST FOR THE CITY, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

A moratorium ordinance will be drafted for council adoption.

The board recommended permits not be required for replacing a deck. The board considered it maintenance similar to replacing a roof or windows and a permit is not needed for those. Any other changes to the deck would require a permit. If size changes, etc. take place and no permit was issued, it would be considered work done without a permit and the penalty would be assessed. Council approved.

The current Neptune software used for collecting meter readings is no longer being supported. The city must upgrade to the new version. The estimated cost for that is \$2,670. This is based on the number of accounts in the system. The city also needs to upgrade the meter reading device. There is a belt clip option for \$6,650 and a mobile data collector option for \$12,000. The mobile data collector option is about 10x more powerful than the belt clip option. Looking to future growth, staff thought the mobile data collector option would be best.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE PURCHASING THE MOBILE DATA COLLECTOR, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

MN State Retirement System Deferred Compensation Plan - This is a voluntary savings plan for state and municipal employees offered by the State of MN and authorized by Section 457 of the Internal Revenue Code. Any employee interested would have payroll deductions made to contribute to the plan. There doesn't need to be any employer contribution and there is no cost to the city for employees to enroll in the plan.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE ENROLLMENT IN THE MN STATE RETIREMENT SYSTEM DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLAN, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

2024 Fee Schedule and ordinance adopting it were reviewed. Increasing sewer rates was discussed. The rates have not been increased in several years and there is new debt due to the lift station rehab project. Council will consider at the January meeting.

City logo contest – There were 19 submissions. Council narrowed the field down to 4, suggesting edits to each. The 4 finalists will be advertised in the paper asking residents to email the city with their favorite.

There was an issue with the meter at the Elementary School, making the usage appear much higher than normal. Public Works and school personnel are working to resolve this. Council approved to adjust the charges to their average for November.

The city digital sign is out. Scenic Sign thinks it was a power surge. No further details are available at this time.

A Flexible Benefits Plan document is necessary to allow employees to have certain deductions made pre-tax. The city's plan from 2008 is outdated and a new plan reflecting current IRS code is needed. TASC is a benefits administrator that would supply a new plan document and administer certain benefits for the city. There is a \$40 monthly fee and a \$200 annual renewal fee. Groups under 10 are billed annually. TASC does not accept payment by check, so ACH would need to be authorized.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO USE TASC FOR BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE PAYMENT BY ACH FOR TASC SERVICES, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

I.T. Solutions is increasing its monthly maintenance contract fee from \$120 to \$135.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE I.T. SOLUTION INCREASE AND CONTRACT RENEWAL, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

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

Next regular meeting is January 11, 2024 at 7 p.m.

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

Adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Submitted by

Deb Kramer, Clerk

ATTEST:

Chris Rowan, Mayor