

APPROVED MINUTES
WATKINS CITY COUNCIL
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2023

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Chris Rowan, Tootz Tschumperlin, Brenda Carlson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Marc Wirz, Sue Unterberger

OTHERS PRESENT: Jody Bauer, Duane Peterson, Ron Kramer, Jeff Hilsgen, City Engineer Kent Louwagie, Deputy Sandstrom, Deputy Clerk Sarah Krone, Public Works Director Steve Geislinger, Clerk Deb Kramer

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

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

Items on the Consent Agenda: January 10th & 26th special meeting minutes, January 12th regular meeting minutes, January financial report, Resolution No. 2023-8, Resolution Accepting Donations, delinquent water bills for shut off.

Public Forum – none

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

Jody Bauer noted the ambulance service would like to invest in some certificates of deposit. Citizens Bank MN has a special for a 15-month CD at 4%. They would like to buy a \$100,000 CD from the New Ambulance Fund and a \$300,000 CD from the Operations Savings account.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE PURCHASING A \$100,000 CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT FROM NEW AMBULANCE FUND #500851811 FOR A 15-MONTH TERM AT 4% TO COMPOUND QUARTERLY, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE PURCHASING A \$300,000 CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT FROM OPERATION SAVINGS #500481211 FOR A 15-MONTH TERM AT 4% TO COMPOUND QUARTERLY, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Fire Chief Ron Kramer reported the John Deere generator the department has is quite old, leaks fuel and parts aren't available any more. It is used to run portable lights at fires and different things as needed. The department got a quote from PowerHouse Outdoor Equipment in St. Joseph for a new one for \$1,079.10.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF A NEW GENERATOR, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

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

City Engineer Kent Louwagie updated council on the lift station replacement project. Bolton and Menk is working on design and preparing bidding documents for the project. Plans and specifications will be submitted to MPCA for certification and the loan application to Public Facilities Authority (PFA) by the March 31st deadline. They anticipate to advertise for bids in April. After bids are opened, financing can be finalized and the contract can be awarded. Construction could begin as materials and equipment are ordered and delivered. Kent noted there have been extended lead times on generators and variable frequency drives (VFD'S) that could affect the construction schedule. They anticipate the majority of construction could occur in 2023.

The project is eligible for funding on Part B of the PFA's 2023 Intended Use Plan (IUP) but the MN Legislature has yet to pass a bonding bill. As a result, PFA doesn't have funding available for projects listed on Part B of 2023 IUP. PFA and MPCA recommend communities still proceed with project certification, despite the unknown timeline of a bonding bill.

PFA determines grant eligibility during the loan application process. Based on the engineer's preliminary review of their criteria, it appears the project wouldn't be eligible for grant funding, only low interest loan. If the city wishes to proceed with the project, there may be a need to carry project costs until PFA is funded. The city could explore interim financing to assist with these costs rather than funding them internally. There would be some additional costs for this, which are reimbursable by the permanent financing. Kent noted it's unlikely that delaying the project would result in any cost savings or increased grant eligibility. The city could waive the PFA funding and finance the project on its own as well. The cost of the lift station is estimated at \$1 million. The design fees will be approximately \$100,000. If there is no bonding bill passed, the city could bond for the project. PFA funding is probably about 1% lower on interest rates. The bid documents would require the bidder to honor the bid for 61 days.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2023-9, RESOLUTION OF APPLICATION, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Council advised to continue advertising for staff for the seasonal pool. Kramer will check to see if offering a bonus as an incentive could be done.

Code of Ordinances and Zoning Ordinance amendments, parking regulations, administrative tickets – Council agreed to table action on the amendments until March when full council is present. Issuing administrative tickets for parking during snow removal season was discussed. Deputy Sandstrom noted the city would have a citation book to issue parking tickets. The city would then keep all of the fines instead of getting a share through the state system. Administrative tickets would be paid at City Hall. Geislinger noted the parking has gotten better since the first snowfall. Sandstrom noted there would be a 30-day window to pay the administrative ticket. The ticket would be left on the vehicle with no private information on it. If not paid in the 30 days, then a state citation would be issued. Sandstrom noted Dassel is towing vehicles, but they are having some issues with it. Council tabled discussion on the administrative tickets until March.

The Fire Protection District approved increasing the fire department hourly wage by \$1 at its annual meeting. Per hour wage would increase from \$12 to \$13 per hour.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE A \$1 PER HOUR WAGE INCREASE FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO 2023-1, ORDINANCE ADOPTING 2023 FEE SCHEDULE, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Kramer noted a Certificate of Deposit for the American Rescue Plan Fund is coming due February 22nd and needs to be cashed in. These funds are needed to pay for the design work on the lift station project.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO CASH IN CD X0800 DUE FEBRUARY 22, 2023, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Council reviewed a template of an application for Request for Financial Assistance for Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Northland Securities recommended the city require \$13,000 in escrow to pay for their fees to establish a TIF District, legal fees for drafting a development agreement and any publication costs. The city could require less (\$10,000) for an escrow deposit and communicate to the developer those costs are strictly for establishing the TIF District and any additional costs related to drafting the development agreement would need to be covered by the developer separately. The fees would be collected up front.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE THE APPLICATION FOR REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Council agreed to require \$13,000 for an escrow deposit.

A resident on Meeker Avenue South is planning to re-window and re-side his home. He'd like to get a storage unit to store the materials in and would need a dumpster as well. He asked if he'd be allowed to place either the dumpster or the storage unit on the street. He would be looking at starting after April 1st and keeping it for no more than six months. Discussion followed. Council felt it would be better to have the storage unit on the street than the dumpster. They agreed to allow the storage unit for 3 months and it would need to have proper bracing underneath when its placed so it doesn't damage the street.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE THE STORAGE UNIT ON THE STREET FOR 3 MONTHS, IF AN EXTENSION IS NEEDED THE OWNER NEEDS TO COME BACK AND REQUEST, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

The clerk's PTO request was approved. City Hall will be closed February 22nd.

Kramer noted that Representative Urdahl's office has requested bonding bill requests for this session.

Public Works Director Geislinger requested Keith Peters be sent to a Certified Pool Operators course in Plymouth in April. This is a 2-day course.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE KEITH PETERS ATTENDANCE AT A CERTIFIED POOL OPERATORS COURSE, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Geislinger requested approval for himself and Keith Peters to attend MN Rural Water Association's annual conference March 7-9 at St. Cloud.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE REQUEST TO ATTEND THE RURAL WATER CONFERENCE, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Geislinger reported the motor for the garage door opener for the city maintenance truck was never replaced when the others were. There are safety concerns and it should be replaced. American Door Works quoted \$1,334 for a new opener and installation.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE THE NEW GARAGE DOOR OPENER, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

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

Next regular meeting is Thursday, March 9th at 7 p.m.

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

Adjourned at 8 p.m.

Submitted by

Deb Kramer
Clerk

ATTEST:

Chris Rowan
Mayor