

APPROVED MINUTES
WATKINS CITY COUNCIL
THURSDAY, JULY 8, 2021

Acting Mayor Tootz Tschumperlin called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. at City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Acting Mayor Tootz Tschumperlin, Sue Unterberger, Marc Wirz. Brenda Carlson arrived at 7:06 p.m.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mayor Chris Rowan

Others: Dave Hokanson, Karri Hokanson, Lynn Hokanson, Jeff Hilsgen, Jody Bauer, Randy Berg, Deputy Ernie Defries, Public Works Director Steve Geislinger, Clerk Deb Kramer

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

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

Items on the Consent Agenda were June 10th meeting minutes, June financial report, Resolution No. 2021-20, Resolution Accepting Donations and Resolution No. 2021-21, Resolution Approving Transfer of Funds.

Public Forum – none

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

MOTION BY UNTERBERGER TO APPROVE THE AMBULANCE SERVICE SECOND QUARTER REPORTS, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

Dave Hokanson was present regarding the alley vacation. It was confirmed that the alley has not been vacated yet. Hokanson noted it has been 11 months now and asked what the city's next steps are. Wirz noted it was his understanding that once vacated, it would become a civil issue. Wirz noted the city doesn't know any more than the property owners on the process; the city is going on the city attorney's guidance. Hokanson noted there was still the issue of the buildings on the alley. Hokanson stated he had a retaining wall on the alley and he got permission from the city to put it on the alley, but he would remove it. Hokanson noted all the stuff on the alley is in violation of city ordinance. Hokanson stated he filed a formal complaint with the city that all alleys be in compliance. Hokanson also noted about the drainage issue and that it is not compliant with the city's Drainage Ordinance. Wirz asked about the work Hokanson and Berg did to make the water drain away. Hokanson noted it still floods. Carlson questioned why the city would do anything further on the matter until the city knows which way to go. Hokanson noted again it's violating the city ordinance. Hokanson noted he filed an official complaint asking for all the alleys to be in compliance with the city's ordinance that they all be unencumbered. He noted if the city chooses to do nothing, then the city is picking and choosing what ordinances it will enforce. Wirz noted to Hokanson that the city gave him permission to put a fence on a portion of the alley and do the drainage work and now he wants the city to enforce things. Hokanson stated he is asking for all alleys in town to be in compliance with the ordinance. Wirz noted the council is going with

the city attorney's guidance and if it ends up in court and the court rules against the city, the city will do what's needed. Wirz noted the council made the decision to vacate the alleys and didn't think the city was going to change that. Wirz noted his understanding was once it's vacated the land goes back to the owner. Lynn Hokanson asked what the city was basing its decision on and if the property won't need to be surveyed, etc. Carlson noted according to the city's attorney, that is not up to the city. It was noted the city is not selling the property; it is releasing it back to the original property owners. Wirz noted he wasn't sure how it all worked, but the city attorney said once it's vacated, the city is done with it. Karri Hokanson noted a neighbor planted a tree on the alley recently on the portion they have been maintaining. Carlson questioned if the city could send letters to all the property owners involved advising them not to do anything with the alleys until the matter is settled. Kramer will check with the city attorney on this. Dave Hokanson asked if the city could take a stance that property owners need to stay on their portion of the alley. The council will act on a revised resolution for the alley vacation at the August meeting provided a full council is present. It will then be submitted to the County Auditor.

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

IT quote – Wirz didn't have any information. Item was tabled until next meeting.

Code Red – This agreement is good through June, 2022. Kramer noted the city would attempt to collect information from residents that haven't responded yet when fall and spring newsletters are sent out.

Fire Department appointments – The personnel committee and fire chief reviewed the background checks and recommended appointment of all four applicants.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENTS OF JACOB KRAMER, NICK MEIERHOFER, AARON DOCKENDORF AND JOE KUECHLE, JR. TO THE WATKINS FIRE DEPARTMENT, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Ordinance updates – Kramer noted Justice Walker would attend a meeting to go over the new Right-of-Way ordinance and answer any questions on it and any of the other proposed amendments. Council agreed to review the information first and discuss at the August meeting and decide if a meeting with Justice is necessary.

Fields for Kids Program – Wirz talked to elementary principal Rob Pederson about applying for a grant to improve the Little League field. Wirz noted he would like the public works director involved as well. Wirz will talk more with Pederson. The application deadline is typically the end of March and again the end of June so there is time to get a plan together for 2022.

Planning commission update – Sara Krippner is not a resident of the city any longer which is a requirement to be on the board.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO TERMINATE SARA KRIPPNER FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION DUE TO NON-RESIDENCY, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ADVERTISE FOR REPLACEMENT ON THE PLANNING COMMISSION, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO PASS ON MEMBERSHIP TO THE MN COALITION OF GREATER MN CITIES, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

The city is a finalist for MN Real Estate Journal City of the Year. The award program will be July 29th at the Depot in Minneapolis. There is a fee for the table. Rowan and Unterberger expressed an interest in attending. The EDA meets Monday night and they will discuss as well. This may be something the EDA could pay for.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE ATTENDANCE AT THE AWARDS PROGRAM FOR MN CITY OF THE YEAR, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Concession stand wage – One employee from 2019 returned to the pool this year and is getting paid the same rate as the new staff. Council felt the pay should be increased. Discussion followed.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO INCREASE VICTORIA REIKOFSKI'S WAGE .50 PER HOUR RETROACTIVE TO START DATE FOR THE SEASON, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Meeker County Housing Committee – Council recommended to talk to Frank Eder and see what his opinion is since he was on the committee at the time. Council agreed that if Eder felt it should reconvene then the council would be in favor.

Resume water shut offs – Kramer noted some of the accounts are getting far behind. Kramer noted that throughout the pause on shut-offs, letters were sent to accounts that were getting behind reminding them that the pause wouldn't go on indefinitely. The peace-time emergency has been lifted by the Governor effective July 1st. Just days prior to the announcement that the Governor was going to lift the peace-time emergency, accounts that were 2 or more periods behind were sent letters notifying them that once the emergency was lifted by the Governor, shut offs would resume.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO RESUME WATER SHUT OFFS, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Subordination on rehab loan – Council reviewed a request for a subordination of mortgages for Andrew and Heidi Donnay.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE THE SUBORDINATION OF MORTGAGES, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Co-pool managers Kris Butterfass and Bella Butterfass noted things were going well at the pool. July 4th had some slow time but they were open all day. Kris noted there are some employees interested in getting certified to teach lessons next year and also some concession stand staff that are interested in getting lifeguard certified. Council agreed lessons would be held next year as long as there are instructors. Wirz asked if the managers were interested in returning next year. Kris noted as long as she doesn't need the certifications she would be. Kris asked about closing early. Council advised to keep tracking the attendance for a little while longer and they will discuss hours again.

Kramer noted Rick Reikofksi accidentally left an outside faucet on for a couple days while they were gone and asked for an adjustment to the sewer charge. The usage was 14,000 gallons of water. A datalog report was done and it confirmed the dates and showed the spike in usage and Public Works

Director Geislinger confirmed that it was likely left on as that area was the only green area of grass in the yard.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO CHARGE FOR THE WATER AND ADJUST THE SEWER TO AVERAGE, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Public Works Director Geislinger received three quotes for paving the parking lot at the corner of Central Avenue North and 2nd Street North. This would be to excavate and remove the existing blacktop and pave 3.5 inches of bituminous wear in 2 lifts. Quotes as follows: Mid-Minnesota Hot Mix - \$46,880.00, Minnesota Paving & Materials - \$45,150.00, Hanson Paving - \$35,950.00. Once it's done, parking should be limited to allow it to cure.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ACCEPT THE QUOTE FROM HANSON PAVING FOR \$35,950.00, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Deputy Defries has not been able to make contact with the resident regarding the complaint on keeping of chickens from last month.

Unterberger asked if the city could paint more curbs yellow. She noted the section of Meeker Avenue North from 3rd St N to 4th St N has a resident that parks vehicles on both sides of the street making it difficult for traffic to get through. She noted an emergency vehicle wouldn't be able to get through. Council discussed putting up "no parking" signs on one side of the street. No action was taken.

Carlson asked about the complaints Dave Hokanson stated he filed. Kramer noted they have been referred to the city attorney for his opinion.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE BILLS FOR PAYMENT AS PRESENTED, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Next regular meeting is Thursday, August 12th at 7 p.m.

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

Adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Submitted by

Deb Kramer
Clerk

ATTEST:

Chris Rowan
Mayor