

APPROVED MINUTES
WATKINS CITY COUNCIL
THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2014

Mayor Loch called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. at the Watkins Village Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Dennis Loch, Jerry Hesse, Sue Unterberger, Melody Gertken, Jersey Piccerillo

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Others present: Deputy Josh Case, Steve Geislinger, Clerk Deb Kramer and others.

Mayor Loch opened the meeting with a public forum to get the public's input on the baseball association's request for financial assistance to build a grandstand at the baseball park.

The ballpark is owned by the Eden Valley-Watkins School District. The city has a twenty year lease on it for \$1 per year. There are 16 years remaining on the lease. The city attorney and auditor have been contacted regarding this request. The city cannot legally donate to the baseball association. It was the attorney's opinion the city could, under the lease agreement, make leasehold improvements at the baseball park in order to improve the recreational facilities at the location. The city would have the right to remove any improvements made upon termination of the lease, per Section 4 of the lease agreement. The attorney felt as long as it was understood the city would own the improvements and not the ball team, and the city paid the funds directly for the improvements that this would be a legitimate expense. The city would also want to know there was sufficient funding available to ensure the project would be completed.

Mike Lease, representing the baseball association, stated the association was looking for help to build the grandstand. They are projecting a \$60,000 shortfall. Mike noted it's a city park that will be here forever and would bring a lot of people to our community.

Mark Forsman, representing the MN State Baseball Board, stated that a community can bid for the state tournament every ten years and it's a very competitive process. The board selected Watkins on a first time bid along with Cold Spring, who has hosted before, to host the 2015 state tournament. Mark noted the attendance records reflect paid attendance only. This does not include the players, volunteers, etc. Mark noted the restaurants, bars and gas stations will all benefit from this.

Lease noted all the funds would go for permanent fixtures at the park.

The state board requires 300 covered seats and 700 seats total. A third site is designated in case of bad weather; however, the goal is to get all the games in at Watkins and Cold Spring. Mark noted there is more room in the schedule now since Class B and C are single elimination.

Gate proceeds go the state tournament-35% goes to the state and then participating teams get a share. Concession sales and novelty sales are projected to be \$50,000.00, which the association would use to pay back a loan to fund the rest of the grandstand expenses.

There were comments from people on both sides of the issue. Some that spoke were not in favor of using city funds to pay for it. However, the majority of people who spoke were in support of building the grandstand with city funds.

Mayor Loch noted a joint powers agreement between the city and baseball association would need to be drafted if the city agrees to help with the project. If approved, funding would come from the city's reserves and the council may need to look at cutting some other things.

All funds during the regular season at the park are used to cover expenses there. The gate fees pay for the umpires. Concessions pay for upkeep, balls, etc. so those funds are already spoken for.

One or two first responders will be needed during the tournament.

Mark Forsman noted the board will be back in August to look at the field at which time it will need to be up to par. The state board felt parking needs would be covered.

When questioned if there was ever anything negative about hosting a tournament, Mark noted that when Dassel hosted it the championship fell on the city's festival and there was no parking. Other than that there was nothing. If the community gets the field up to par, there is no chance of losing the opportunity to host the tournament. The tournament would run three weekends, ending on Labor Day weekend.

One taxpayer noted he was all for it and asked why the city wouldn't want to do this. Mayor Loch replied the city wouldn't if the taxpayers were against it. Unterberger noted that was the idea of the public forum-to get opinions.

The baseball association solicited signatures to use taxpayer dollars to support the stadium and got 109 residential signatures and 27 out of 40 of the business taxpayers along with other community supporters.

Discussion was held on property taxes. Gertken noted not all the council agreed to push it onto the taxpayers and some cuts may be needed. Hesse noted there are two roads that need to be fixed and the water tower needs repair and asked if the city should just keep pushing those needs off.

Lease noted that the Clippers have raised \$90,000 and spent it at the park on improvements.

Mayor Loch closed the public forum at this time.

Mayor Loch noted that Walter Kramer no longer needs to be on the agenda.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY PICCERILLO TO APPROVE THE AGENDA, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER.
MOTION CARRIED.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY PICCERILLO TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA, SECONDED BY GERTKEN.
MOTION CARRIED.

Items on the Consent Agenda were minutes of the February 13th regular meeting, February 24th emergency meeting, February financial report, Resolution #2014-8, Resolution Accepting Donations and delinquent water bills for shut off.

Deputy Case presented the Sheriff's report. There were 35 calls for service in February.

Chuck Unterberger noted that people are stilling running the four-way stop at Central Avenue North and Fourth Street North. Case noted he would have to witness the violations to issue a citation.

Old Business- Baseball park funding request

A MOTION WAS MADE BY PICCERILLO TO APPROVE THE BASEBALL ASSOCIATION'S REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE GRANDSTAND AT AN AMOUNT OF \$60,000 AND TO DRAFT A JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT, SECONDED BY GERTKEN. PICCERILLO, GERTKEN AND UNTERBERGER VOTED FOR, HESSE VOTED AGAINST. MOTION CARRIED.

Mayor Loch noted he was against giving the financial assistance.

Piccerillo noted he felt the public came out in support of it.

Council called for a special meeting to be held Thursday, April 3rd at 7 p.m. at City Hall to draft a joint powers agreement between the city and baseball association. Piccerillo and Gertken asked about not being paid for the special meeting. It was decided anyone not wanting to be paid could donate their pay back to the city.

The Watkins Firemen's Relief Association requested a 3.2 malt liquor on-sale license for Saturday, April 5th for a benefit at the Village Hall.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY GERTKEN TO APPROVE THE LIQUOR LICENSE REQUEST, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Centra Sota has submitted a preliminary plat and final plat application for combining all its property under one legal description and one parcel number. The planning commission held a public hearing on the request and recommended to the council the approval of both plats. The city attorney and county surveyor need to review yet and respond.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY GERTKEN TO APPROVE CENTRA SOTA'S PRELIMINARY AND FINAL PLAT APPLICATIONS CONTINGENT UPON THE CITY ATTORNEY AND COUNTY SURVEYOR'S APPROVALS, SECONDED BY PICCERILLO. MOTION CARRIED.

Alex Westrup, Amelia Hengtes and Adam Dockendorf are new members of the Watkins Ambulance Service.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY UNTERBERGER TO APPROVE THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE WATKINS AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION, SECONDED BY GERTKEN. MOTION CARRIED.

EDA update-Gertken noted the board will be having a visioning session at the Village Hall Tuesday, April 8th at 7 p.m. Loch noted the board is also trying to get a clinic to come back to town.

Planning Commission meetings will now be held the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. starting April 2nd.

Kramer noted she adjusted sewer charges for two properties in town. Public Works verified that the water usage did not enter the sanitary sewer system.

The League of MN Cities will hold its annual conference June 18-20 in St. Cloud. The deadline for the reduced rate is May 1. Unterberger and Gertken noted they would like to attend.

Waivers for using city owned buildings were discussed. Piccerillo suggested using the same type of agreement for the skating rink as what is used for the Village Hall. Council will review a draft at the next meeting.

Piccerillo asked about street repairs to be done. Geislinger will contact contractors.

There was some water in the Legion Club Room again. Hesse thought a curb on the north side of the building would alleviate this problem. Geislinger agreed and also suggested to make some changes where the fan is located in the north wall of the club.

Swimming Pool- A swimming lesson schedule and sign-up date are being worked on. Geislinger has been checking on sandblasting and painting. One contractor suggested going with a liner instead. Geislinger thought they may only need to acid wash and paint instead of sandblasting.

Geislinger asked about the repairs to the water tower. Council advised to have the engineer meet with Geislinger and the contractors at the site and have them submit quotes. The public health concerns should be addressed.

Geislinger noted the loader needs two front tires. Prices he was getting were between \$900 and \$1,000.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY HESSE TO PURCHASE TWO NEW TIRES NOT TO EXCEED \$1,000 EACH, SECONDED BY GERTKEN. MOTION CARRIED.

Council approved to have Meeker County mark one crosswalk by St. Anthony Church. Kramer will check if the city can maintain them or if the county has to.

Kramer noted that the Fire Department has applied for a Community Partnership grant from CenterPoint Energy.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY GERTKEN TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF ALL BILLS, INCLUDING AMBULANCE, SECONDED BY PICCERILLO. MOTION CARRIED.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY GERTKEN TO ADJOURN THE MEETING, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by

Deb Kramer, Clerk

ATTEST:

Dennis C. Loch, Mayor