

APPROVED MINUTES
WATKINS CITY COUNCIL
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2023

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Acting Mayor Tootz Tschumperlin, Sue Unterberger, Brenda Carlson, Marc Wirz

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mayor Chris Rowan

Others present: Jody Bauer, Jeff Hilsgen, Matt Geislinger, Mark Messman, Dave Schneider, Rob Pederson, Kent Louwagie, Public Works Director Steve Geislinger, Deputy Clerk Sarah Jacobsen-Krone, Clerk Deb Kramer

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

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

Items on the Consent Agenda were minutes from September 14th special and regular meetings, September financial report, Resolution No. 2023-32, Resolution Accepting Donations, and delinquent water bills for shut off.

Public Forum – none

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

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE THE AMBULANCE SERVICE THIRD QUARTER REPORTS, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

Matt Geislinger reported the baseball association continues to work on finishing the hitting facility. Watkins will host the Stearns County region tournament in 2024.

EV-W Superintendent Mark Messman spoke regarding the upcoming school operating referendum. The 2022 referendum failed. The district has been using its fund balance the past two years. The district's monthly bills run around \$500,000 to \$700,000. The annual budget is \$11,000,000.00. Eighty percent of the budget is employee costs. Messman noted the district needs to be competitive with surrounding districts. The state maximum is \$2,100 per pupil. EV-W is at \$77 per pupil. The district is asking to increase this to \$460 per pupil. This is an operating levy only for daily operations and workforce pay. It is not for any new programs, buildings or athletic facilities. This levy would not impact agricultural land. The referendum market value of an agricultural homestead would include only the house/garage and one acre of land.

Council reviewed an estimate from Kramer Electric to add more electrical services at McCarthy Park. The work includes a light by the Alayna Ertl statue recently added, along with more services for Christmas decorating. The estimate is \$3,213.71. The Lions Club would donate funds to the city for this work. Electric bills would be at city expense.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE THE ADDITIONAL ELECTRICAL AT MCCARTHY PARK, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

City engineer Kent Louwagie reported there has been additional discussion with public works staff and the contractor regarding the lift station project. There is a section of sanitary sewer main extending southwest out of Central Avenue South that is older PVC pipe. There is also a manhole southwest of Central Avenue South that is in bad shape and should be replaced. Estimated cost for engineering and replacement of the sewer main and manhole is \$30,000 to \$40,000.

Kent noted the driveway to the lift station crosses County Ditch 20. There are currently two culverts under the driveway, 30-inches and 60-inches in diameter. These culverts are apparently undersized as the driveway has repeatedly washed out after heavy rains and spring snow melt. The contractor has proposed removing the existing culverts and installing a 12' x 6' box culvert under the driveway. The engineers would need to evaluate the hydraulic capacity of the proposed box culvert and coordinate with the local ditch authority. If this appears to be a workable solution, and the city wants to proceed with it, plans would be prepared for the box culvert installation and apply for a modification to the wetland permit that has already been issued. The contractor has proposed a cost-sharing arrangement where they would provide the box culvert at no cost to the city and the city pays for the design and installation. The cost to the city for the engineering and installation for the box culvert would be \$40,000 to \$50,000.

Kent anticipates the sanitary sewer work would be PFA eligible and since the city hasn't closed on the loan yet, the loan amount could be increased accordingly. In light of this additional work, PFA was asked to pause the loan process to allow time to check into this. The box culvert may not be eligible for PFA funding due to the proposed cost-sharing arrangement. This would need to be confirmed with both MPCA and PFA. If the city wishes to proceed with the work, Bolton and Menk would start preparing documents to add this work to the contract. A change order would be presented for council approval at a future meeting. Total estimated costs for engineering and construction would be approximately \$90,000.00.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO INVESTIGATE THE ADDITIONAL SEWER MAIN AND CULVERT, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

It was noted the grant from MPCA for the work at the pond site is for materials only, labor costs are not eligible.

Council reviewed Meeker County's draft ordinance regulating the use of cannabis and cannabis derived products in public places. This draft would cover all of Meeker County, including all cities. This would prohibit the use of cannabis in public places, including streets and sidewalks. Council felt the draft was acceptable.

Council reviewed quotes from Faber Building and Vossen Bros. Construction to add more shade to the south side of the pool. Faber's quote was \$10,450.00. Vossen Bros. quote was \$9,950.00. The Watkins Lions Club has committed to donate funds to pay for this.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE VOSSSEN BROS. CONSTRUCTION QUOTE OF \$9,950.00 TO BE PAID BY LIONS CLUB, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

The new Earned Sick & Safe Time (ESST) law will be effective 1-1-2024. This will apply to all employees of the city, including volunteer public safety departments. All employers are required to give 1 hour of ESST for every 30 hours worked. Council reviewed the different options of establishing the ESST, one of which allows for payout to the employee for any unused time. Staff recommended the first option of

accrual and carryover, where all employees start out at zero on January 1, 2024 and accrue from that point. Any new employees would start accruing from their first day of employment. Employees are permitted to accrue a minimum of up to 48 hours of ESST in a year and they can carry over unused ESST into the next year, however, at no time can an employee's accrued ESST exceed 80 hours. There would be no payout of unused hours with this option. Seasonal positions more than likely won't accrue enough hours each year and would start at zero each January 1st. This law doesn't apply to any employee that works less than 80 hours each year. The treasurer position with the ambulance service will be discussed more at the next meeting. Earned sick and safe time may be used in the smallest increment of time tracked by the employer's payroll system, provided such increment is not more than four hours.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ADOPT OPTION 1, ACCRUAL AND CARRY OVER, FOR EARNED SICK AND SAFE TIME, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Health insurance eligibility requirements were discussed. This will be followed up on at the November meeting.

Any notices served for ordinance violations by Meeker County Sheriff's Office need to go through Civil Process. The fee is \$80. The city has requested this fee to be waived but hasn't received an answer at this time. Discussion followed on sending notices by first class mail vs. certified or serving. This will be discussed more at the November meeting.

LP-Watkins is in need of temporary parking for employees. They would like to make a temporary gravel parking area to the east of their storage buildings. This temporary area wouldn't comply with all regulations of the Zoning Ordinance. After discussion, council agreed to the temporary parking area.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ALLOW LP WATKINS TO HAVE A TEMPORARY GRAVEL PARKING AREA FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENTS OF FIRE CHIEF RON KRAMER AND ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF CHAD UNTERBERGER, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

EDA update – Brodin Studios is looking for a larger parcel to relocate. The highway frontage by Glenshire Estates is zoned B-2 Highway Commercial, but his business is a manufacturing business. Council felt it should tour his business before discussing any rezoning. Brodin would need to return the lot on Highway 55 east to the EDA if he doesn't build on it. Council advised to check on the purchase agreement or statute on the sale of the EDA property to Kuechle for storage sheds as this property hasn't been developed yet.

Michelle Garmon applied for the open EDA position. Michelle is currently on the Planning Commission. The EDA board made a recommendation for her appointment.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF MICHELLE GARMON TO THE WATKINS EDA, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 1ST 2 A.M. RENEWAL LICENSE FOR GORDIES BAR, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

A resolution certifying unpaid water and sewer charges at 531 Cedar Avenue North to property taxes was presented. Total amount to certify is \$101.72.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2023-33, RESOLUTION CERTIFYING UNPAID CHARGES, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Council agreed to hold a contest for designing a city logo with a \$100 prize for the winner. Deadline is December 1st.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO HOLD A CITY OF WATKINS LOGO CONTEST WITH A \$100 CASH PRIZE, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Council discussed parking on city streets. There are some streets that have become congested with vehicles making it difficult for buses and emergency vehicles to turn the corner and get through. Discussion followed. Council agreed to have all intersections in the city painted the same as Central Avenue intersections.

Public Works Director Geislinger noted the 3 sidewalk panels on Meeker Avenue South that were damaged by a contractor a few years ago have now been replaced by the contractor. The steps that were in the boulevard were also removed. Public Works will be handling the restoration.

Geislinger noted he would like to have the concrete driveway removed in the alley on the lot owned by the EDA. This would help for snow removal. He thought they may be able to remove it with the loader. Locates would be needed first to see where the natural gas line runs.

Carlson noted she had a request from a resident for another 30-mph speed limit sign on the southbound lane of Central Avenue, closer to St. Antony Church. Discussion followed. Council agreed to ask the deputy to park on Central Avenue more to check the traffic speed before considering another sign be put up.

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

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

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

Adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

Submitted by

Deb Kramer
Clerk

ATTEST:

Chris Rowan
Mayor