

UNAPPROVED MINUTES  
WATKINS CITY COUNCIL  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2020

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Frank Eder, Tootz Tschumperlin, Sue Unterberger, Marc Wirz, Jason Laumer

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Others: Jody Gruenes, Rita Reikofski

Mayor Eder added Rita Reikofski to the agenda.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE THE AGENDA WITH THE ADDITION, SECONDED BY LAUMER. MOTION CARRIED.

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

Items on the Consent Agenda: minutes of the August 13, 2020 regular council meeting, August financial report and Resolution #2020-19, Resolution Accepting Donations.

Public Forum – none

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

Matt Geislinger was present on behalf of the Watkins Baseball Association. They would like to run water and sewer up to the dugouts for the new shed and finish the retaining wall. Council approved.

Rita Reikofski, a resident of the mobile home park, along with a couple other residents, expressed concerns with the new park owners bringing in new homes while there are 9 old, uninhabitable ones not being moved out. She noted some have been vacant more than 12 years. The group noted many of the residents have kids and they are playing near these houses. Rita noted there are mice and rats and snakes. Rita noted the new owners took over 2 years ago this November. Rita stated there are 13 empty lots there and 49 total lots. Rita was manager for 7 years and gave it up in June. Rita stated she was told they were going to get the homes out and now she has heard they are going to bring in new ones and not taking out the old ones. Rita said they are uninhabitable and they have black mold in them. Wirz noted the city is going to be working on updating its ordinances so this could be something to be looked at. The group noted some aren't padlocked shut and they have to tell kids to stay out of them. Rita left a list of the abandoned ones. Eder noted he drove through the park a couple weeks ago and there were some homes that looked like you could hardly get in them because they were stuffed with beds, mattresses and junk. Rita noted a couple of them would take 40-yard dumpsters to empty. Wirz asked as being past manager if she had discussions with getting the homes out of there. Rita noted the previous owner did remove several of them. Rita stated 5 homes were abandoned this year alone and nothing is being done with them. When the previous owner hauled them to the landfill it was \$700 a house to haul them. One owner lives in Tennessee and the other in California. Wirz asked about

sending a letter to the owners asking what their intent is and letting them know there are concerns about health and safety issues. Rita noted she heard they planned to bring in new trailers next week. Kramer confirmed they do need a land use permit before bringing a home in. Council discussed sending a letter addressing the vacant/abandoned homes and the health and safety issues as well as needing permits for new homes. Council noted they will be working on updating the city's ordinances and addressing these issues as well. Rita noted something has to be done. She noted she has been trying for years to get some of these houses out of there. Wirz thought these homes were being moved out. Rita noted the last owner removed three of them. Laumer felt the city should look at some kind of ordinance that if it sits empty for so long it has to go. Council agreed, especially if it's causing rats and mice to come around. Rita noted that of the nine vacant ones, one has been vacant for twelve years and another has probably been vacant for six or seven years. One of the residents noted they are not able to get contact information for the owners. They also said they have asked for licensing for the park and they can't see that either. Rita noted when she was manager, she would get a letter from the state every six months stating what needed to be fixed. She noted she hasn't seen one in five or six years now. It was noted the tornado in 2016 damaged some homes too. Council informed Rita the city would send a letter to the owners and hopefully that will get things moving.

Chief Deputy Becky Howell presented the Sheriff's report. There were 35 calls in August.

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

Extra patrol with the Sheriff's Department was discussed. Laumer noted he spoke with Sheriff Cruze about the issues happening late at night, especially during summer. Cruze noted this was happening in other communities as well. Laumer asked if the department would be able to staff on Friday and Saturday nights until 2 a.m. during the summer and Cruze said they would be able to. Laumer's thoughts were to try the extra coverage from May thru October next year. Howell noted there is anywhere from three to six additional hours per week in the city when a deputy comes through as part of their shift that the city doesn't get charged for. The city currently has coverage every other weekend per the contract hours. Council discussed having additional coverage so every Friday and Saturday night would be patrolled until 2 a.m. Council discussed starting in spring to give the Sheriff's department time to work out staffing. Howell suggested starting in April as the weather starts getting nicer. Council agreed to try it for one year starting April 1<sup>st</sup> through Oct 31<sup>st</sup>. This would give the city coverage every Friday and Saturday night until 2 a.m. for the period of April 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup>. This would be an extra four days per month April through October. Howell will work on a revised contract and get it to the city.

The request for the camper at the apartment site construction project is no longer necessary.

Council discussed membership to the Coalition of Greater MN Cities.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO DECLINE MEMBERSHIP TO COALITION OF GREATER MN CITIES, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

Mid-MN Development Commission submitted a proposal for updating the city's ordinances. This would be for both the Zoning Ordinance and the City Code. They are offering a 20% discount off their normal hourly rate of \$85 and will charge \$68 per hour for up to 80 hours. They expect all work will be completed and ready to present proposed changes at a public hearing in January 2021.

MOTION BY LAUMER TO APPROVE MID-MN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION PROPOSAL TO UPDATE ORDINANCES, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

Kramer noted that LED lights were installed at Village Hall as well. Xcel Energy's bonus rebate on the bulbs expired August 31<sup>st</sup> so the lights had to be ordered before then.

Council reviewed the Watkins Trail and Pedestrian Plan. The city will need to make a financial commitment to the project. Eder noted the VFW and Lions Club are both in support of the project. Wirz noted the trail would need to be maintained year-round. Discussion followed on what could be used to clear snow should the trail come to fruition. It would be a paved, ten-foot wide trail. A cost estimate needs to be prepared by the engineers.

MOTION BY LAUMER TO APPROVE THE WATKINS TRAIL AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

CARES Act funding – Kramer reported the first Local Government Expenditure report was submitted to the state. Five more plexiglass barriers were purchased - two for City Hall and three for the pool concessions and two hand sanitizer dispensers as approved earlier for City Hall. Kramer noted more hand sanitizer dispensers are needed for city buildings. Kramer also got a quote for a laptop from Skeeter Technology for the clerk's use should it be necessary to work remotely due to COVID-19. The cost of the laptop and setup would not exceed \$1,500.00. The clerk would be able to access everything on the desktop computer via the laptop. Council agreed to purchase seven more hand sanitizer dispensers for the pool facility, Village Hall, and skating rink facility. Council also agreed that the laptop was necessary should the clerk have to work remotely due to COVID-19. Council discussed purchasing a washer and dryer/extractor for public safety turnout gear. If it looks like there will be some unspent funds, the city should let Meeker County know as soon as possible so they can plan to use the funds.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE PURCHASE OF A LAPTOP AND HAND SANITIZER DISPENSERS AS DISCUSSED, SECONDED BY UNTERBERGER. MOTION CARRIED.

The Development Agreement with Watkins Leased Housing LLC wasn't finalized in time for the meeting.

Planning Commission update – Any subdivision of an existing lot in the city needs to be surveyed. Discussion followed on grants/assistance for survey costs to residents.

MOTION BY UNTERBERGER TO APPROVE THE FALL NEWSLETTER DRAFT, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

The special meeting scheduled for September 15<sup>th</sup> was changed to September 16<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. Purpose will be to act on the 2021 proposed levy and budget and Development Agreement with Watkins Leased Housing LLC.

Public Works Director Steve Geislinger presented a quote from Royal Tire for tires on the loader and tractor. Flash's Gas & Auto doesn't handle the large tires any more. The tires for the loader are approximately \$5,000 if the city removes the tires. Royal Tire would sipe the tires on the plow truck. Cost would be \$295. Back tires for the tractor would be \$2,273. Geislinger noted the pool has been winterized and surfacing the bathroom floors will be done.

Council approved to send a letter to Mike Klein to remove the school bus parked on his property.

Council approved to send a letter to Kris Petermeier regarding the camper that's been parked on the street.

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

Next regular meeting is October 8<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m.

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

Adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Submitted by

Deb Kramer  
Clerk

ATTEST:

Frank Eder  
Mayor