APPROVED MINUTES

WATKINS CITY COUNCIL

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2022

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

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sue Unterberger

Others: Barry White, Ron Kramer, Public Works Director Steve Geislinger, Kent Louwagie, Jody Bauer, Ethan Jenzen – MN DNR, Deputy Clerk Sarah Krone, Duane Peterson, Jeff Hilsgen, Chris Lease, Clerk Deb Kramer

Mayor Rowan moved Barry White up on the agenda to follow the Ambulance Service 3rd quarter reports.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE THE AGENDA WITH THE CHANGE, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

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

Items on the Consent Agenda: September 8th regular meeting minutes, September financial report, Resolution No. 2022-29, Resolution Accepting Donations, delinquent water bills for shut off, April 28th joint water board meeting minutes and financials.

Public Forum – none

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

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE THE AMBULANCE SERVICE 3RD QUARTER REPORTS, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

Barry White requested approval to do a curb cut in front of his property to make a parking area in the front. Barry would like to extend the existing driveway area south to his front sidewalk. The planning commission recommended to the council to grant the request.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE THE CURB CUT AND PARKING AREA, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Ethan Jenzen, MN DNR Area Hydrologist, presented information on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The program is a FEMA program and MN DNR handles it at the state level. Each county in the state has to adopt the floodplain ordinance. Cities have the option to if they choose to do so. If the city would choose to participate in the program it would need to adopt an ordinance. The DNR has a model ordinance available. There is no cost to the city besides staff time. Any existing structures in the floodplain would not have to be removed if the city chose to adopt the ordinance. Anyone needing flood insurance would have to buy it a very high premium, if they can get it at all, if the city doesn’t participate. The city would be the administrator of its ordinance. The DNR would only step in if the city is not following the ordinance. The DNR would work through the process of enrolling in NFIP with the city.

City Engineer Kent Louwagie noted the lift station and force main rehab and replacement project ranked #55 on the Intended Use Plan. He would expect the project to be funded once the Legislature passes a bonding bill. This would probably be a low interest loan, no grant funds. Wirz asked if the city has made any repairs to the portion of the force main that is north of the city. Geislinger noted once and there were 2 repairs made by Highway 55 from rock vibrating on the pipe. Wirz asked if the city should consider making this a phased project and do the force main at a later date. If it’s a 50-year lifespan on the pipe, there should be about 10 years left. He questioned if the city would be throwing money away to replace the force main before the end of its useful life. Could the lift station be done as phase one now and then the force main at a later time. The total project estimate is $3.2 million. The lift station only is $1.1 million. Kent asked the council to consider that the pipe may need to be bigger due to the new lift station. The city would want to match up the force main size with the lift station to be most efficient. Carlson asked how a phased project would affect what’s been submitted for funding. Kent thought the score would probably go down, but he would need to check into it. Discussion followed on pipe capacity. Council noted they would like to see numbers of what the tax impact will be on taxpayers by doing the total project and doing a phased project. Council approved for Kramer to check with the city’s financial advisor to develop some scenarios.

Ron Kramer, Watkins Fire Department, requested approval for an increase in fire department officer salaries. Current salaries are: Chief - $500, Assistant Chief - $300, Treasurer - $300, Secretary - $300, Training Officers - $100 (x3). Proposed salaries: Chief - $1,000, Assistant Chief - $600, Treasurer - $600, Secretary - $600, Training Officers - $300 (x3). The last known increase was in 2009 for the Assistant Chief and Treasurer.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO APPROVE THE ABOVE SALARY INCREASES, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ACCEPT THE SHERIFF’S REPORT, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Ordinance updates – Public hearing date set for Thursday, November 17th at 7:10 p.m. Council will hold a special meeting before the hearing at 7 p.m. to canvass the election results.

Health insurance – Carlson asked to table until next month to review this more.

MOTION BY CARLSON TO TABLE HEALTH INSURANCE DISCUSSION UNTIL NOVEMBER 10TH MEETING, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

Kramer noted she did not find anything in past minutes regarding approval of the Lifeguard Management Course the pool manager took. Cost was $120. Discussion followed.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO REIMBURSE THE MANAGER $60 (50%) OF THE FEE THIS YEAR, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Any courses taken in the future must have pre-approval.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO APPROVE APPOINTMENT OF FIRE CHIEF RON KRAMER AND ASSISTANT CHIEF CHAD UNTERBERGER, SECONDED BY TSCHUMPERLIN. MOTION CARRIED.

Planning Commission update – A fence at 331 Western Avenue was approved to allow 6’ height in the front yard limits. An application for a variance from side yard setbacks at 175 Meeker Avenue South. The owner is looking to sell the lot for a house to be moved in which cannot meet the minimum setback requirement. A public hearing is set for Wednesday, October 26th at 6:30 p.m. They may be looking at setting the garage up front and the house back further as well.

EDA update – David Tysk is interested in building townhomes at Glenshire Estates. He would like to work with city and apply for grant funding again through MN Housing Workforce Housing and create a tax increment financing housing district. The empty lot on Central Avenue will be advertised for sale for commercial use only – no parking lot. The lot Brodin Studios bought from the EDA on Highway 55 is not big enough for his use now. The board is looking for other options for him.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE RENEWAL OF GORDIES BAR 2 A.M. LIQUOR LICENSE, SECONDED BY WIRZ. MOTION CARRIED.

The Lions Club has requested approval for off-site gambling for a purse bingo event at St. Anthony Parish Center on November 5th.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 2022-30, RESOLUTION APPROVING OFF-SITE GAMBLING, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Council approved for the deputy clerk to attend council and planning commission meetings.

Geislinger noted a street light by Jack’s gas station will need to be relocated for Jack’s rebuild project. Geislinger will follow up on this.

Geislinger reported TV’s and computer monitors have been left at the recycling trailer. This is a free service for the residents, but TV’s and monitors are not acceptable items. Signs will be posted at the trailer. Council agreed if those items continue to be left, the city will have the trailer removed.

Chris Lease, Red Goat Bar and Grill, requested approval to shut down the central business district main block on Central Avenue for the annual pub crawl Saturday, October 29th from 5 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. The DJ would be outside on the street, weather permitting.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO APPROVE CLOSURE OF STREET FROM 5 P.M. TO 1:30 A.M., SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

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

Next regular meeting is Thursday, November 10th at 7 p.m.

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

Adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by

Deb Kramer

Clerk

ATTEST:

Chris Rowan  
Mayor