

M I N U T E S  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
January 16, 2024  
5:30 PM  
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King. Council Members Paul Fischer, Laura Helle, Jason Baskin, Michael Postma, Joyce Poshusta, Geoff Baker and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Police Chief David McKichan, Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum, Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, Park and Rec Director Jason Sehon, City Attorney Craig Byram, Human Resources Director Tricia Wiechmann, and Library Director Julie Clinefelter

APPEARING IN PERSON: Val Sheedy (Mower County Assistant Public Works Director)

Mayor King called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving the agenda. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Fischer, approving Council minutes from January 2, 2024. Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving the consent agenda as follows:

Licenses:

- Tobacco: Austin Tobacco & Vape (103 S. Main Street)
- Lodging: Greenwich Guest House (208 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW)
- Right of Way: Mr. Rooter Plumbing (Fridley, MN)
- Right of Way: Kevin Neitzell Construction, LLC (Hayward, MN)
- Massage Therapist: Ping Wang (506 Oakland Avenue W)
- Massage Therapist: Jian Guangshao (Rochester, MN)
- Mobile Business: Tono's Tacos LLC (Albert Lea, MN)
- Right of Way: Concrete Cowboy LLC (Brownsdale, MN)
- Right of Way: Arvig Enterprises (Perham, MN)

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of bills

b. Investment Report.

Carried.

## PUBLIC HEARINGS

A public hearing was held for a tax abatement hearing requested by Bigelow and Lennon Construction. They are proposing to build a single-family home at 1805 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE valued at approximately \$309,000. City Administrator Craig Clark stated the application is in conformance with the City's policy for tax abatement.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, approving a five-year tax abatement for Bigelow and Lennon Construction. Carried 7-0.

## AWARDING BID

Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum discussed the proposed Driesner Siphon project. This project had been bid out in prior years; however, the bids came back significantly in excess of the budget and estimates. We have rebid the project and have received the following bids:

<u>Contractor</u>	<u>Bid</u>
Minger Construction Co. Inc.	\$ 982,458.00
Elcor Construction	\$1,639,444.00
Ulland Bros. Inc.	\$1,649,573.65
S.M. Hentges & Sons, Inc.	\$1,763,988.30
R&R Excavating, Inc.	\$2,344,581.73
Engineer's Estimate	\$1,100,000.00

Mr. Wenum noted they have discussed the project with Minger Construction Co. Inc. and they stand by their bid. Mr. Wenum noted they specialize in this type of difficult project. Funding for the project will come from 50% Local Option Sales Tax and 50% from the WWTP.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Baskin, awarding a bid for Driesner Siphon project to Minger Construction Co. Inc. Carried 7-0.

## PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum stated the City's goal is to assess 40% of the construction costs to the adjacent property owners on the street reconstruction projects. In 2023, the City assessed 27.4% of the total project costs. The Council reviewed the matter at their January 2, 2024 work session and recommended a 7% increase to the rates for 2024.

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting a resolution setting 2024 street assessment rates. Carried 7-0.

Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum discussed the proposed options for the reconstruction of Oakland Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SW in 2025-2027. At the January 2, 2024 work session Council discussed three options for the reconstruction, noting Option 1 would not make any changes to the roadway or sidewalks. Option 2 would create an 8-foot sidewalk on one side which would narrow the driving lanes by 1 foot and the parking lanes by 6 inches. Option 3 would create wider 6-foot sidewalks on both sides and would narrow the driving lanes by 1 foot and the parking lanes by 6 inches. Mr. Wenum noted the recommendation from Council was Option #2 as the January 2, 2024 work session. This is also the option recommended by City staff.

Council Member Baker noted 55% of the survey respondents preferred to keep the road the way it was, with no reduction in the lane width, and keeping the current sidewalks the current width. Council Member Fischer noted his agreement, as did Council Member Poshusta adding that we need to listen to our constituents.

Mr. Wenum noted the standard lane width is between 10 and 12 feet, so our proposed width at 11 feet is right in the middle. The extra three feet of width on the sidewalks will provide for better walkability through this main corridor.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Postma to approve Option #2 for the Oakland Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SW street reconstruction project. Carried 4-3 (Council Members Baker, Fischer, Poshusta – Nay).

Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum discussed the request to use some 2023 unused project funds to help pay for a project design contract for the potential Whitewater Project. The estimated total project costs are \$73,575 and we are requesting using \$25,000 from unspent trail project approved funds from 2023. This \$25,000, plus other contributions we are looking at applying for, would be used to get approximately 30% of the design study done. We can then take the study to the DNR to see if the project would even be approved by the DNR.

Council Member Baker noted we have other social issues in our community, like housing and food security, for example, that the City should be focusing their efforts and funding on instead. Mayor King noted the redevelopment of this area could open up additional opportunities for development of housing and recreational activities in the area, and noted his support for this funding request.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving the use of \$25,000 for the funding of a Whitewater project design. Carried 5-2 (Council Members Baker, Fischer – Nay).

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution accepting donations to the City of Austin. Carried 7-0.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert stated the Fraternal Order of Eagles #703 is requesting an off-site gambling license at the Mower County Fairgrounds (700 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW) for March 1, 2024.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, adopting a resolution approving an off-site gambling license for the Fraternal Order of Eagles #703 at the Mower County Fairgrounds (700 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW) for March 1, 2024. Carried 7-0.

Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum presented a request for approval of an application to apply for a grant of \$300,000 to help with the project funding of the street reconstruction on Oakland Ave and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SW. This grant is through the State of Minnesota from the Active Transportation Program (ATP).

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Baker, adopting a resolution approving the application for a \$300,000 grant through the State of Minnesota and the Active Transportation program (ATP). Carried 7-0.

Mayor King noted Council Member Helle is being replaced by Council Member Baker on the Austin Housing and Redevelopment Board. Otherwise, the boards and commissions list would remain as presented.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Baker, approving 2024 Council boards and commissions appointments. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Baker, granting the Planning and Zoning Department the power to contract for the removal of junk and/or illegally stored vehicles at 1306 11<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Hastings Property. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, granting the Planning and Zoning Department the power to contract for the removal of junk and/or illegally stored vehicles at 304 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW, Hoy Property. Carried.

## REPORTS

Council Member Baskin thanked the snow plow drivers for their work over this last snowstorm.

Council Member-at-Large Austin announced the January anniversaries amongst city staff.

Council Member Postma urged everybody to get involved in the Paint the Town Pink activities.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, adjourning the meeting to February 5, 2024. Carried.

Adjourned: 6:00 p.m.

Approved: February 5, 2024

Mayor: \_\_\_\_\_

City Recorder: \_\_\_\_\_