

M I N U T E S
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
January 21, 2025
5:30 PM
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King. Council Members Paul Fischer, Laura Helle, Jason Baskin, Michael Postma, Joyce Poshusta, Rebecca Waller 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, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Planning and Zoning Director Holly Wallace, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Park and Rec Director Jason Sehon, City Attorney Craig Byram, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Human Resource Director Trish Wiechmann, and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald, SEH Representative Mark Nolan, Detective Dustin Hicks, Officer Josh Bradley, Officer Ryan Hansen, Officer Aaron Juenger

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

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

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving Council minutes from January 6, 2025. Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Licenses:

Temporary Liquor: Mower County Fair on March 8, 2025

Temporary Liquor: Mower County Fair on August 5 to August 11, 2025

Temporary Gambling (raffle): Austin Area Chamber of Commerce on March 7, 2025

Temporary Gambling (raffle): Mower County Fair on April 8, 2025

Temporary Gambling (raffle): Austin Area Chamber of Commerce on April 24, 2025

Right of Way: South East Septic LLC, Dexter, MN

Right of Way: Michels Utility Services, Inc., Brownsville, WI
Right of Way: Michels Pipeline, Inc., Brownsville, WI
Right of Way: Metro Fibernet, LLC, Evansville, IN
Tree Service: Carr's Tree Service, Inc., Ottertail, MN
Mobile Business: Neveria Azteca LLC, Austin, MN
Cigarette: Austin Tobacco & Vape, Austin, MN

Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

Mary Lingren to the Austin Mower – County Homeownership Fund Board
expiring December, 31 2027

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of Bills
- b. Financial Report
- c. Investment Report
- d. Credit Card Report

Carried.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving 2025 Council boards and commissions appointments. Carried.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert requested the Council approve an audit engagement letter with CliftonLarsonAllen. The proposed audit fee is \$54,117, which is a 6.7% increase over the previous year.

Council Member Baskin asked why there was an increase.

Mr. Danker stated it was due to staffing costs.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Helle, approving an audit quote from CLA, LLP. Carried 7-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang gave a recap of the summer averaging program. He stated this will be a six month on six months off program that monitors usage of water going into the sanitary sewer. This usage would be billed on the actual consumption.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, approved the updated sanitary sewer summer averaging program. Carried 7-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the City's goal is to assess approximately 40% of street assessment costs to the property owners. He would recommend increasing street assessment fees approximately 7%.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting a resolution setting 2025 street assessment rates. Carried 7-0.

SEH gave a presentation on the Comprehensive Plan to Council. Mark Nolan, Senior Planner with SEH gave an update on scheduling for the project.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert stated as part of the five-year capital improvement plan the City Council had set aside a fund balance of \$400,000 for a purchase of a Bearcat armored vehicle for the Police Department. He would like to do a budget adjustment to the general fund to pay for this.

Police Chief David McKichan stated this is an investment in the City's officers and the officers to come. The current Humvee the Police Department has was received over a decade ago and was already a hand me down from the military and will need to go back to the military.

Chief McKichan stated currently they have some delamination of the windows to where it is not going to be usable and they can't get replacements from the Federal government. He stated this is an opportunity to make that investment in a replacement unit.

Mayor thanked the officers in attendance and thanked them for what they do for us.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting a resolution approving budget adjustment number 2. Carried 7-0.

Mayor King requested a motion for the approval of the Cannabis Ordinance.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, for preparation of the Cannabis ordinance. Carried 6-1. (Council Member-at-Large Austin-Nay)

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Fischer, for the adoption of the Cannabis ordinance. Carried 6-1. (Council Member-at-Large Austin-Nay) As this is the second reading of the ordinance, it passes with a simple majority in favor.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving a resolution for summary publication of the ordinance. Carried 7-0.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert relayed information on budget adjustment number 3. Mr. Dankert stated there were two requests in the budget adjustment. One from Parks and Recreation and another from Public Works.

Mr. Dankert stated Parks and Recreation will need to purchase a new field groomer. The cost of the new field groomer would be \$35,000. Parks and Recreation would forgo purchasing a new gator this year and they would purchase a loader at a lower cost to be able to come up with the fund balance to pay for the \$35,000 field groomer.

Mr. Dankert stated the Public Works department looks to share ownership of a chip spreader with Mower County through cost share and will need to authorize \$115,000 from fund balance to the central garage fund.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adopting a resolution approving budget adjustment number 3. Carried 7-0.

Planning and Zoning Director Holly Wallace discussed a preliminary plat approval. Ms. Wallace stated the application was brought to the Planning Commission on January 14, 2025 by Nature Ridge Properties. The plat is 12.5 acres and the proposed subdivision would contain thirty lots. After review, with five Planning Commission members present, the commission voted unanimously, 5 ayes and 0 nays, to approve the preliminary plat as proposed with the following conditions:

1. Final approval by the city engineer and Austin Utilities.
2. That a development agreement and civil drawings detailing all facets of the construction and any remaining minimum subdivision standards required for the pending project, be submitted along with the final plat.
3. The final plat shall be submitted and approved within six months of approval of the preliminary plat.
4. All applicable provisions of the subdivision code and permitting agencies shall be met.
5. Any issues regarding the strip of land not subdivided at the North end of the property shall be resolved.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated with this project the City is going to look at constructing the project with the city format for street reconstruction, where the city will get involved. The process will involve publicly bidding the project and assessing the project cost back to these thirty lots. Essentially, the City is becoming the funding entity for this project. This will allow for the City to be more involved with the infrastructure construction to ensure that the work is getting completed according to City standards. It also helps to ensure that timelines are being met, as it will be under the City's control and oversight.

Mr. Lang stated this helps the developer in that the City is becoming the lending agency and those costs are assessed back to these properties. Mr. Lang is working with the City attorney to develop the necessary agreements right now. He stated the final assessment hearing would be conducted this fall and the costs would show up on those empty lots in the spring of 2026.

Council Member Helle asked what the risk would be to the community if the houses don't get built?

Mr. Lang stated this is always a possibility. The intent with this is these assessments would be spread out on the property taxes over 15 years. He stated there's always risk to the City when someone could walk away from those assessments. They felt this was a good way to promote development and gave a developer other options for funding sources with the City playing that

role. He stated in weighing those different risks, they felt this was a good option to keep projects moving forward.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the project would be secured by the land. If the project developer defaulted then the City would secure the land. This would turn the City into being a developer, which they are not interested in doing but they could turn around and sell the land to another developer.

Council Member Baskins commended them on their creativity. He stated by making it less risky for a developer it makes a difference to make housing financially feasible. He feels we are going at this with the right approach.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the hardest thing is for the developer to come up with the capital for the infrastructure and he agreed there are risks but stated the City can take a patient attitude with it and help developers along.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving a preliminary plat for Natures Ridge Fourth Subdivision. Carried.

Public Works Director Lang stated in the CIP they have identified the replacement of a sweeper. He stated selling this at auction will give the department the best return and is requesting Council authorization to sell it.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Helle, approving a request for sale of equipment. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution approving a gambling permit for Hayward Fire Relief Association. Carried 7-0.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the Coalition for Greater Minnesota Cities Legislative Action Day is on February 12th if any Council Members would like to attend.

Council Member Baskin stated today was the celebration of life for Bob Brinkman and wanted to recognize him. He stated he was a wonderful member of the community and thanked him for all his contributions.

Council Member Poshusta stated the Human Rights Commission put on a dinner in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. and thanked all that made it possible.

Council Member Fischer thanked the officers in attendance. He thanked them for all the work they do every day.

Mayor King also mentioned the Martin Luther King, Jr. dinner and thanked all who attended. He read off the January anniversaries.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adjourning the meeting to February 3, 2025. Carried.

Adjourned: 6:21 p.m.

Approved: February 3, 2025

Mayor: _____

City Recorder: _____