



**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
August 2, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm.

Present: Mayor: Charlie Miner; Council: Jahn Dyvik, Mike Feldmann, Gina Joyce, and Deirdre Kvale

Staff Present: City Administrator: Scott Weske; Fire Chief: Mike Heiland; Public Works Director: Sean Diercks; Finance/Utilities Officer: Amanda Nowezki; and City Clerk: Jeanette Moeller

Absent: None

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MAYOR'S COMMENTS – LONG LAKE NEWS, MEETING REVIEW AND UPDATES

Mayor Miner reported on events that had taken place in the City over the last few weeks, beginning with Buckhorn Days. He expressed appreciation to the volunteers, the Long Lake Area Chamber of Commerce, the Wayzata Police Department, and Chamber Board member Marty Schneider for their work to make Buckhorn Days a successful event. Additionally, last weekend, the Long Lake Fire Department held their annual Red Hot Run 5K which experienced great turnout. Last but not least, five neighborhoods held Night to Unite get togethers the previous evening on August 1.

Mayor Miner reminded residents that the Corn Days festival at the Church of St. George and the Corn Days Parade would be coming up on Saturday, August 12.

APPROVE AGENDA

Mayor Miner indicated that a discussion of City utility billing rates had been unable to occur at the work session, and would be added to the regular meeting agenda as the first business item.

A motion was made by Miner, seconded by Dyvik, to approve the agenda as amended. Ayes: all.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda consisted of the following:

- A. Receive Minutes of July 5, 2023 City Council Work Session
- B. Receive Minutes of July 5, 2023 City Council Meeting
- C. Receive Minutes of July 18, 2023 City Council Work Session
- D. Receives Minutes of July 18, 2023 City Council Meeting
- E. Approve Vendor Claims and Payroll
- F. Adopt Resolution No. 2023-31 Approving Issuance of Special Event Permit #S2023-09 for the 50th Annual Corn Days Parade on August 12, 2023
- G. ~~Adopt Resolution No. 2023-33 Appointing Jared Hasse to the Position of Full-Time Public Works Maintenance Worker I for the City of Long Lake (removed)~~

Mayor Miner noted that Item G. would be removed from the Consent Agenda because that individual had withdrawn their interest in the position.

*A motion was made by Dyvik, seconded by Joyce, to approve the Consent Agenda as amended.
Ayes: all.*

OPEN CORRESPONDENCE

No one was in attendance to address the City Council during Open Correspondence.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Discussion of City Utility Billing Rates

Finance/Utilities Officer Nowezki advised that staff would like to propose changing the City's utility billing schedule from quarterly to monthly billing and explained that they would also like to look at a rate increase at the same time. She reflected on the importance of being cognizant of the impact changes would have on residents and noted that staff's intent was not to gouge residents but rather to focus on finding a balance to cover the increased costs/expenses of operating utilities. She reported that at the end of 2022, the Sewer Fund had a negative \$239,000 balance in cash, and recycling had a negative \$26,691 balance in cash, which is very concerning. Currently the city is budgeted to lose almost \$332,000 in the combined Enterprise Funds. She gave a detailed presentation of staff's proposed potential rate schedule and reviewed the projected impacts to residential, commercial, and apartment owners. As a part of the proposed schedule, Nowezki also suggested the addition of a 'water treatment fee' of \$3.19/month to start covering the Metropolitan Council treatment costs. While the new fee would not cover the City's Metropolitan Council billings, it would help residents begin to understand the cost of treatment of the water.

City Administrator Weske clarified that the 'water treatment fee' would be a fixed cost and not calculated per 1,000 gallons.

Council member Feldmann commented that he would like residents to see information about the Metropolitan Council fees so they understand more about the role they play.

Mayor Miner suggested that staff allocate space for background information about Metropolitan Council and a water treatment fee on the bill form.

Nowezki added that the City pays \$20,634.67 each month to the Metropolitan Council.

Council member Dyvik calculated that would turn out to be about \$300/month/household.

Nowezki replied that she was just trying to get things started in a positive trend with her suggested \$3.19/month towards Metropolitan Council treatment costs.

Council member Kvale inquired about the water and sewer rates proposed per apartment.

Nowezki responded that in the past apartment complexes had paid a base rate per meter, but in some cases that was for a whole building served by a single meter. She is proposing that be changed to implement an additional base charge of \$2/apartment, so there would be a charge per building and also a charge per apartment; thereby treating water and sewer tiers for apartment purposes more in line with a residential tier. She continued her review of potential rate changes; answered Council member questions; provided information on revenue that would be captured in the Water, Sewer, Surface Water/Storm, and Recycling Funds under the concept billing schedule on a monthly billing basis; and summarized the current audited balances at the end of 2022 for Funds 601, 602, 603 and 604.

Public Works Director Diercks pointed out that the numbers being presented did not have any future projects included in them as of this time.

Nowezki confirmed that Diercks was correct. The numbers only reflect operating costs and do not include capital projects. She added that staff is also recommending a change for unmetered residential properties and reviewed details of the current situation.

Council member Dyvik voiced that he viewed the rate proposal favorably, especially because of the high Metropolitan Council fees that the City has to pay.

Council member Feldmann indicated that he thinks the changes would be a great start and asked that staff look for a way to make particularly the Metropolitan Council billing information more transparent.

Nowezki agreed that she believes staff could add something to the bills that more clearly outlines the Metropolitan Council fees.

Council member Dyvik suggested that there also be information included in the City newsletter to explain that people will see an increase in sewer and water rates, and including an explanation of what the City pays to the Metropolitan Council.

Nowezki observed that she feels strongly that the City needs to start moving on a new rate schedule because they have not kept up with operating costs and needs to this point.

Council member Dyvik stated that he thinks the City should make these changes as soon as possible.

Council member Kvale asked if staff would be able to handle the proposed billing changes.

Nowezki replied affirmatively and explained that they no longer outsource utility billing. Staff had purchased a folder/stuffing machine allowing her and City Clerk Moeller to 'tag team' the bill process. She added that there are currently 219 residents that use auto-pay.

City Clerk Moeller mentioned that she believes the switch to monthly billing may encourage even more resident interest in signing up for auto-pay.

Council member Dyvik noted that he had heard the comment made that moving to monthly billing is just the City trying to hide the increases.

Nowezki reflected that she feels it will be easier for people to budget for their utility bill expenses with a monthly billing schedule and shared the potential advantages; for example, someone having a water leak at their residence, because it will be noticed via meter reading and billing much more quickly than it would have with the quarterly billing.

Council member Dyvik questioned whether staff had made any kind of allowance for people who may be metering separately for watering their lawns.

Nowezki clarified that property owners have purchased a separate water meter, they do not pay sewer charges on that water. Since her proposed rate schedule doesn't increase the water rate, there would be no increased cost for water except based on actual usage, so essentially there would be no impact to a resident who had purchased an irrigation meter. She encouraged the Council to contact her if they had any other questions.

Approval for Upgrading Current Meter Reading Equipment and Associated Meter Reading Software

Public Works Director Diercks indicated that since 2015, the City has read water meters via radio read, but the City's current meter reading technology solution will no longer be supported after December. He gave an overview of how the current system works and explained that there is an option to upgrade the software to a cloud-based solution while continuing to use the current belt clip receiver in combination with a laptop or tablet. He stated that he would recommend the City take that approach to start, and shared the results of testing he had participated in of the new software and equipment earlier in the day. He added that comparing the old system and this newer system are not even comparing apples to apples because the technology is so different. He explained that a new receiver upgrade is priced at \$9,400; however, he would like to see how the system works using the existing belt clip receiver before making a decision to spend that money in the future.

Nowezki shared that right now the utility meter reading software is only on one extremely outdated computer at City Hall. The meter vendor company had approached Diercks and advised him that they would be going completely cloud-based next year.

Council member Dyvik asked about the annual cost for the upgrade software.

Nowezki reviewed the proposed cost breakdown for the new meter reading equipment and software. She clarified that right now, Diercks was not asking for any hardware purchases outside of a new laptop, but was requesting the software upgrade only.

A motion was made by Miner, seconded by Joyce, to authorize staff to proceed with upgrading the current water meter reading equipment and associated water meter reading software at an amount not to exceed \$10,000. Ayes: all.

Diercks added that he had spoken with the meter vendor today and had been advised that there is over a year lead time for new water meters. Luckily there was a city in North Dakota that had ordered 3,100 of the wrong meters, but those meters happened to be what Long Lake uses. He stated that he is planning to purchase 40 of them so Public Works will have some in stock until the lead time situation goes away.

Resolution Establishing Edible Cannabinoids Retail Registration and Renewal Fees

Moeller gave an overview of her recommendation to go with the maximum amount the City is authorized to charge for the registration of edible cannabinoid retailers. She explained that the fee as proposed would be \$125 per registrant for their initial application and first two years, with an annual \$125 renewal fee due thereafter. She confirmed that four businesses have already made an application to register.

Council member Kvale voiced confusion about the statute language included in the staff report.

Moeller explained that the fee language in the statute relates to the State's application and licensing fees, which differ from what the statute permits the City to charge.

Council member Dyvik confirmed that the City's fee is for registration and not a license.

A motion was made by Miner, seconded by Joyce, to adopt Resolution No. 2023-32 establishing Edible Cannabinoid Retail Registration and Renewal Fees for inclusion in the City Fee Schedule. Ayes: all.

Discussion of Code Enforcement Procedures, Director to Staff

Weske recalled that there had been discussion previously about finding a better code enforcement procedure and noted that code enforcement currently follows a complaint based system. He observed that it requires quite a bit of staff time to write letters and follow up on the complaints. He stated that staff is looking for feedback from the Council on a different approach, for example, utilizing duty crews to complete some of this work. He asked what the Council would like to see for enforcement and how aggressive they would like to be.

Council member Kvale asked for examples of what kind of situation they would be dealing with.

Weske responded that it could be anything from grass being too tall, unregistered vehicles, and junk in people's yards.

Moeller explained the current code enforcement process in greater detail and noted that follow up was easier when the City had a full-time City Planner because code enforcement was a daily portion of their job. Once the on staff Planner position was eliminated, since that time, staff has never really been able to fill the code enforcement gap as staff's workload continues to increase. She shared how Wayzata deals with code enforcement by utilizing their Community Safety Officers and indicated that she would like to know how much they would charge the City to take on those sorts of duties for Long Lake. She added that City Hall staff just does not currently have adequate resources to deal with code enforcement issues in the manner that they deserve.

Nowezki shared the difficulty, from a utility standpoint, of rentals that are owned by companies. She explained that finding the correct information for a responsible owner or manager and sending notifications to a company can be difficult and time consuming.

Moeller shared that staff is working on a registration update for rental properties so they can gather more current information for those properties. She added that while it would be nice if the City could have a more proactive code enforcement system, the City should have a system that 'works' from a reactionary perspective before they can consider being more proactive. In the example given for using the Fire Department duty crews, her hesitation with that scenario is that they would not have any citation authority. She indicated the City is already paying for code enforcement efforts with a combination of Planning Consultant Rybak and herself drafting and sending correspondence, and commented that she is questioning whether the City can pay for it to be done better.

Council member Dyvik pointed out that there are some ongoing problems with commercial properties and he would like to see them be included in additional code enforcement efforts.

Moeller voiced that she would like the City to explore actual monetary costs with Wayzata to determine whether Wayzata PD may be a possible solution. She confirmed that code enforcement would apply to complaints on any property whether residential or commercial.

Mayor Miner noted that he also receives quite a few calls with code enforcement complaints from individuals. He stated that he would like staff to continue the discussions with Wayzata and get some firm numbers about what the costs would be for them to take over these actions.

It was the consensus of the Council to direct staff to investigate costs and policy/procedure for code enforcement through the Wayzata Police Department.

Weske confirmed that he would follow up with Wayzata on the matter.

Updates and Discussion Regarding Fire Department Matters

Mayor Miner recalled that the Council had just held a Closed Session meeting prior to the regular City Council meeting with their attorneys to discuss Fire Department matters. He shared that a tentative date of September 26, 2023 has been set for mediation between the cities of Long Lake and Orono, and a mediator has been selected.

He also shared that the Fire Department had begun implementing duty crews the previous day.

Fire Chief Heiland reported that last year, at the end of July, the LLFD had responded to 265 calls and right now in 2023 they are at 303 calls. He commented that he felt the start of the duty crew pilot program yesterday already shows because the station looks great, and he observed that the energy of the Department already feels different as well. He also indicated that the new command vehicle was wrapped last week, will have lights and sirens completed soon, and should be in operation within a few weeks.

Mayor Miner asked if Chief Heiland had seen any patterns yet in the sign up for the duty crews.

Heiland responded that it has been a good mixture of firefighters taking 'working from home' shifts in addition to the other duty crews, and he has been pleasantly surprised by the amount of interest from a good cross section of the Department. He added that he feels like the Department is in good shape because they have some excellent firefighters in the Department. About one-third of the duty crew shifts are currently filled and he is hopeful that by the end of the year that will be up to about 50-60%. He noted that they had opted to open up a Saturday shift for those that were unable to participate during weekdays.

Mayor Miner added that the next Fire Advisory Board meeting will be held August 8, 2023.

OTHER BUSINESS

LMCC Update - Council member Kvale had attended an LMCC meeting prior to the City Council meeting. She reminded the Council that they had completed a survey regarding the future of the LMCC and advised that Long Lake was one of the only cities that had selected making a monetary contribution to cover the shortfalls as their top choice. Most cities selected an option for the LMCC sell their assets in order to fund the LMCC in the short-term. The LMCC is looking to sell their current building and then to relocate to another location. She mentioned that one of the locations where they were considering relocating was in the basement of the City of Shorewood's City Hall; however, that would not be ADA compliant, which would mean the added expense of installation of an elevator. They had also considered Independence, but Mediacom is not available there. She asked if the City may be interested in having the LMCC rent some space within a City building. Moeller replied that there had been some preliminary conversations awhile back about the LMCC possibly using the front office space in the Public Works building that is currently unused and has its own entrance. She suggested that it may be worth having LMCC tour this area to see if it would even meet their needs. Council member Kvale stated that one requirement they have is that they would need indoor parking space for their mobile production van. Moeller indicated that staff could contact the LMCC and try to schedule a tour for them to come take a look at what the City has available and what improvements may need to be made in order to make it work.

Orono Football Association Fundraiser - Council member Dyvik advised that on August 13, 2023 there will be a fundraiser for the Orono Football Association to include a cornhole tournament at Carbone's, and registration information is available online.

Discussions with Orono Youth Hockey – Council member Dyvik had spoken with the President of the Orono Youth Hockey Association who told him that there is strong interest in having some

sort of participation between them and the City for use of the Holbrook Park skating facilities because ice time is becoming hard for them to get. They appeared to be open to all the suggestions that he raised and he asked how this can move forward. Moeller mentioned that discussions did not continue last year largely because the rink was never flooded due to weather circumstances. Diercks further explained that the skating season would have been about three weeks long, and due to limited staffing, staff had to decide to either plow the streets or flood the rink - they chose the streets. Moeller suggested that Council member Dyvik pass along the contact information for the current Youth Hockey contact and they can start those conversations again.

Swimming Area - Council member Dyvik had noticed that the roped off swimming area at Nelson Lakeside Park was getting a little wonky following the water ski show on Buckhorn Days. Diercks replied that he was aware of the situation, but had not had staff available yet to make the adjustments.

Gardening and Hanging Baskets - Council member Dyvik expressed appreciation to the Garden Club and Public Works for all their great work on the monument sign landscaping. He also voiced his thanks for the work being done to water the hanging planter baskets throughout town. He recalled that there had been talk in the past about asking the businesses to kick in to help cover the cost of the baskets, and asked if there would be a way to see if the City's businesses would be willing to contribute monetarily for the purchase and upkeep of the baskets. Council member Kvale offered to bring up the matter to the Chamber of Commerce at their next meeting and see what kind of feedback she gets. Council member Dyvik indicated that he does not want to see the baskets go away, but would like to see if there could be a way for businesses to partner with the City in their upkeep costs. On another note, he mentioned that there are a few trees in the downtown area with tops that are not doing well. Diercks responded that those trees were like that last year because it was so dry. Council member Dyvik questioned how those trees would look as they continue to grow, and whether they would always look kind of dead on top. Diercks explained that they would always have those dead spots because they don't grow back; however, Public Works could try to prune back the tree and see if it would grow any differently.

City Hall Parking Lot - Council member Dyvik asked if the parking lot at City Hall would be repaved by the contractor for The Stax project. Weske replied that he had originally assumed it was part of the development agreement, but he had not been able to find it documented. He had asked the contractor to quote repaving City Hall's lot but their pricing came back a bit high, so the plan is to wait for a bigger project and include it as a bid alternate.

LGA Awards - Council member Dyvik commented that he did not understand Local Government Aid (LGA) and why Long Lake does not receive any LGA funds, yet Delano and Maple Plain receive such large amounts of money.

Dyvik Family – Council member Dyvik wished his wife a happy birthday today. He also noted that he had missed the last Council meeting because he was in Cooperstown, NY with his son's baseball team.

Night to Unite - Mayor Miner reflected that it had been great to talk to residents at last night's Night to Unite events.

Holiday Tree Lighting - Council member Joyce reported that the Park Board has set the date for the Holiday Tree Lighting event for December 8, 2023 at 5:30 pm.

Vandalism Awareness - Weske encouraged residents to be aware of their surroundings when they are out and about. The City has been experiencing a lot of vandalism at places like the Brown Road bridges, parks, and port-a-potty's. He asked people to call 911 if they see anything so

Wayzata Police can be dispatched out. Diercks mentioned that the parks are closed at 10:00 pm. so if anyone is observing people in parks after that time, they should not be there.

City Website Project - Moeller gave a sneak peak to the Council of the City's new website design and shared some of her favorite features that will be available. She stated that she is hoping they will be able to have the content loaded and the website up and running in about 10 weeks.

City Logo Shirts - Council member Joyce asked the Council to provide their shirt sizes to City Clerk Moeller because they are exploring whether they have be able to have some shirts with the new logo printed in time for Corn Days.

ADJOURN

Hearing no objection, Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting by general consent at 8:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Weske
City Administrator