

Holdingsford City Council and Public Hearing for Municipal Liquor Store Minutes Monday, February 12, 2024

Council members Present: Andy Higgins, Eric Berscheid, Jayme Opatz, Tim Winter

Others Present: Amy Opatz, Herman Lensing, Dave Blommel, Keith Hommerding, Aaron Rudolph, Pat Meier, Randy Schmidt, Nicky Lahr, Ray and Joanne Fussy, Doris Ahrens, Lee Paulzine, Diann Huls, Jean Peleske, Larry Hadley, Gordy Sjaaheim, Steve Horvath, Tony Stalberger, Arlene Warga, Melvin Breth, Angel Becker, Dave Blommel, Sandy Skwira, Steve Andersen, Paul Tomasek, Mary Tomasek, Ron Hylla, Melissa Hartung, Paul Bruns

At 7:00 p.m. Eric called the Council meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Jayme motioned to approve the consent agenda including January meeting minutes and financials. Andy seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor.

Guests: Steve Andersen shared he has been working on taking over the Hillside Trailer Park, and has been paying the monthly utility bills. He explained in December there was a leak under one of the trailers, and it created a large amount of water/sewer use on his utility bill. He asked for forgiveness on the sewer portion since the water did not enter the public sewer system. Tim made a motion to approve forgiveness of the sewer portion of the bill minus the \$90. Andy seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor. Doris Ahrens reported to the council she is the 4th resident to report issues with her septic system connection. Doris stated she had a reputable organization look at photos of her sewer line, they stated the sewer connection was installed incorrectly. Doris indicated this is more than a coincidence, that multiple residents are having similar issues and would like the city to contact the city's insurance company to see if they would cover the scoping or investigating of other residents' homes. She would like to ensure the city was not swindled in installing the sewer connections. Eric explained the prior resident, who brought this forward was part of a different project and had been installed years apart, and possibly not even the same contractor. He also stated we would not know what the true issue was until her sewer pipe was excavated.

Department reports:

City Engineers report was given by Dave Blommel. He has been working with MN Rural Water for help with a study on the potential well location. He is looking to the MPCA and Dept of Health for funding options for a new well and the lift station project.

Fire Department report read by Keith Hommerding. \$4000 donation was made to the truck fund from the fire relief association. Keith asked for an explanation of why the bank accounts were consolidated. Nicky explained the money was all in the general bank account, but the funds are tracked independently in the accounting software. Interest is distributed to each fund separately each month. It was requested a monthly report be provided to show the account totals. Nicky agreed to supply this. The Relief Association continues to receive donations from the Calendar, the Firefighters Breakfast fundraiser will be held at City Hall on March 10th. Gun raffle tickets will be available soon from members as well. There were 19 total fire calls. 18 medical, and 1 vehicle fire. Keith requested to hire a Fire fighter. Jayme made a motion to hire Dustin Siegal as a probationary firefighter. Andy seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor. The FEMA grant is completed and they are hopeful to receive over \$100,000 to purchase new turnout gear. New Overhead doors will be installed this week. Keith will be looking into options for a replacement water tanker. He stated a new build could take up to 3 years. A new cabinet was installed in the meeting room from an anonymous donation. The cabinet was built by Al Walz and the Melrose Ind. Ed. Program.

Maintenance report was given by Steve Horvath. He reported more bricks had fallen off of 571 Main Street. He taped off the area until the owner could get someone out to inspect again. Nicky also stated the owner was asked to repair or remove the torn awning on the building. Steve had TriState on site today to clean and clear the 4th street lift station. TriState will have replacement pump completed by the end of the month. Steve requested the discontinuation of brush collection. This is costing the city up to \$10,000 per year. They will continue to collect grass and leaves, only. Jayme made a motion to discontinue the brush collection. Tim seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor. Steve will have a new sign made for the compost area and will try to monitor with the possibility of cameras. He will further attempt to find other solutions for illegal dumping on the property. Steve requested further training for Andy to retain his wastewater license. The Council approved the costs for this.

Clerk's Report: Nicky stated all information is now entered into Banyon for 2023, and only minor redistributions need to happen yet. The Clerks are preparing for the PNP elections on March 5th. Notifications went out to residents for the increase in utility rates. Audit prep has started and will continue even though an auditor is not hired yet. They are still searching for an auditor for the 2023 fiscal year. Kelly and Nicky are updating written procedures as an ongoing project. They are also looking for a new provider to host the City Website. The current platform is obsolete and Catalis will no longer support it. Nicky and Kelly met with Lance Feia as

suggested by Seth. Lance is not interested in managing the City's IT at this time, but emailed a letter of recommendations based on what he saw. This included a capital replacement cycle for IT equipment, and also recommended the city moves to fiber internet service. He recommends finding a company verses and individual to provide services for the City. Leighton Engineering would like to resolve a contract, or have the City find a different provider. Leighton Engineering is open to counter offers to the proposal. Eric recommended signing a contract with Leighton Engineering, however paying on an hourly basis instead of a set number of hours per month. Nicky will draft and send back to the Council for approval.

Liquor Store Report was read by Amy Opatz. She reported profit of \$5128.49 in January. The Muni made \$650 from the garage sale and has nearly all areas cleaned out now. Inventory was completed and numbers were sent to the auditor. New menu items were added and are selling well. The interior has been updated by removing old décor, and adding new décor, at no cost from vendors, and adding new light fixtures that were purchased with a credit.

Amy requested a temporary FT position for bartender Eric Kohorst. This would run no longer than the end of the year and would not include benefits. This is to cover employee vacations while another employee is out on medical leave. He will also each 1.5 times his pay for any hours worked over 40. Eric made a motion to approve this temporary position. Andy seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor. A request was made for better venting from the fryer. Jayme agreed to look into this.

Unfinished/Old Business:

Charitable Gambling, Holdingford Booster Club: Lee Paulzine reviewed with the Council the items discussed and offered to the City from the meeting held on January 10th as noted in the letter of appeal to the Council. Eric noted some inaccuracies. Jayme and Eric explained to the Booster Club they have been disappointed with the lack of communications with City employees. They explained they have felt bullied and threatened by Booster Club members. They also shared they were discouraged by misinformation put out by the Booster Club in regards to the Charitable Gambling at the Muni. Amy reminded everyone she would like only one gambling organization in the Muni to ensure more accurate money handling, and less confusion. She shared the Fire Relief gambling manager and well as other members communicated with her on a regular basis and spent money in the Muni on a regular basis. She also mentioned neither club was willing to stay if they did not have the e-tabs. Neither club was willing to put in a paper pull tab machine if they did not have e-tabs. Tim explained the money generated from the Pull-tabs is donated to the City, by the Fire Relief Association and directly impacts the taxes paid by Holdingford City residents. Eric explained it is the City Council's responsibility to make decisions that are based on what is best for the city. Eric stated financially the City would benefit more from the Fire Relief Association. Jayme made a proposal for a 6-month probationary period working on the communication. Amy reminded everyone neither group was willing to stay, if they did not have the e-tabs. Ron Hylla joined the meeting and accused Amy of being out of line. Jayme made a motion to terminate the contract for charitable gambling lease with the Booster Club, at the Municipal liquor store. Eric seconded the motion. Andy voted in Favor, Tim Abstained. Motion carries with 3 votes in Favor and 1 abstained.

Tim made a motion to pass Resolution 24-2-12-1 for the Holdingford Purchasing Policy. Andy seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor.

New Business:

Looking Forward: City Hall will be closed for Presidents Day on February 19.

PNP Elections will be held on March 5th at City Hall. Helping Hands meal will be served at the American Legion on this day.

The Fire Department Breakfast will be at City Hall on March 10th.

Past Due Utility Bills: Tawner Cleland; Joseph Doll; Kevin Feia; Robert Keil; Joe Lashinski; Dale Lundberg; Brooklyn McGillivray; Nathaniel Posch; Jared Voudry; Greg Willenbring; Duane Young; Kayla Zarbok

Jayme made a motion to adjourn at 8:52 p.m. Andy seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor.

Signed:

Nicky Lahr
City Clerk-Treasurer, Holdingford