

Holdingsford City Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 11th, 2023

Present: Seth Young, Eric Berscheid, Tim Winter, Nicky Lahr, Jayme Opatz, Andy Higgins, Kelly Abfalter, Keith Hommerding, Dave Blommel, Herman Lansing, Amy Opatz, Gordy Sjaheim, Dave Yurzyk, Scot Laing

Eric called the City Council meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and the pledge of allegiance was recited.

Jayme made a motion to accept the consent agenda and financials from August. Tim seconded the motion. AIF

Guests: Dave Yurzyk with Holding Township and Scot Laing with Krain Township were present to inquire about the Fire Contract with the City. They shared concerns about the City's portion of the quarterly billing (the formula used to determine the percentage) and stated that they would not sign a contract that is more than 5 years. Mayor Berscheid responded, stating that the City wanted the contract to be a 10-year term, and the compromise was already made at 7 years. He said that the City would be willing to agree to a 6-year term, but would not consider changing the percentages at this time. The Township representatives said they would need to bring this to their respective board meetings for approval. Nicky will send out a new copy of the contract before their meetings. The schedule of meetings was also discussed. Eric stated that the contract could lay out when the meetings should take place, but he did not see a need for more than one each year to review budgets.

Department reports:

Fire Department report read by Keith Hommerding. Year to Date, 108 Calls total; 51 in the City, 37 in Holding Twp, 14 in Brockway Twp, 6 in Krain Twp. Keith said the dept had a house burn that went very well. The new grass rig is in service and only \$5,00.00 of City funds was needed to cover the costs of this. The remaining money was from fundraisers and gambling from the Fire Relief Assoc. Tim made a motion to approve the fire budget for 2024. Jayme seconded the motion. AIF. Keith requested an increase to the retirement fund for volunteer firefighters. Jayme made a motion to approve a \$100 annual increase to the retirement. Andy seconded the motion. Keith also requested an hourly pay increase for the volunteers. Eric asked for this to be tabled until the next meeting, and Nicky will provide the cost of this increase.

Maintenance report was read by Eric. Water samples were taken, Mercury testing at WWTP, Crack filling on NE side of town, picked up mixer motor for WWTP, and will install it soon. Finished PMs on Side by Side. Pressure-washed WWTP clarifiers, weirs, and aeration ladder. PM on lawn mower. Condensed the brush pile at the compost site. Tim stated that the fire dept. might be able to do a controlled burn of the brush, and will check with Keith.

City Engineer's report: Dave Blommel was asked to look into the last remaining steps for the City to take over Main Street. He presented a resolution to accomplish this. Tim made a motion to approve resolution 23-9-11-1. Jayme seconded the motion. AIF. Dave also stated that there have been requests to add a 4-way stop on the corner of Main Street and Washington. Tim made a motion to put stop signs up to make this intersection a 4-way stop. Andy seconded the motion. AIF. Eric requested someone check with the Mader property to ensure the shrubs/trees are not in the right of way so the sign can be seen.

Liquor Store Report was read by Jayme Opatz. He stated that the air-conditioning repairs were costly, came in at \$6001.11. Andy made a motion to hire bartenders Tracie Puall and Terry Runge. Tim seconded the motion. AIF. Jayme said that there are currently not enough bartenders to cover all of the shifts until staffing is sorted out. This will cause the hours of operation to be reduced in the interim. Sales were reduced drastically over the last few months, and Season is investigating the core cause to the issue and will communicate full findings to the Council as more information is made available. The month of August's profit/loss was at - \$14,219.31 and \$5914.26 for the year.

Clerk's Report was read by Nicky. She reported that City Hall will be closed on September 14-15 due to Clerk's training in Staples. The first utility bill was run in Banyon software and went smoothly. The Clerks are working with Paya to do the credit card, debit card, and ACH online billing. Customers will receive communication on how to sign up to use this service and to get paperless billing. Paycom issues are still not straightened out. Accrual balances and account import for the accounting software are not set up correctly yet. The 2022 audit is nearing its close. The Clerks discussed looking into other auditing resources for next year. The lost and found bike was not claimed. This will be put up for silent auction along with a pop machine sometime in October.

Unfinished/Old Business:

Requests for sewer forgiveness were revisited. Jayme made a motion to forgive Pam Voss in the amount of \$241.80 and Ben Christensen for 10,000 gallons. Tim seconded the motion. AIF. All other individuals who had requested forgiveness for watering lawns and gardens were not approved. Further discussion; The council will only consider pre-approved sewer forgiveness requests in the future. Other options for residents are to purchase and install a Sub-meter, or to rent a Sub-meter. Kelly said she would look into

all options, including using the software to bill averages in the summer months. She stated that she had concerns about renting meters.

Holiday pay for HMLS employees was tabled for another month.

Eagle Scout Raymond Bloch finished his Eagle Scout project of repairing the city signs. Andy made a motion to thank him for all of his work on this project. Tim seconded the motion. AIF

New Business:

A proposed ordinance regarding the use of cannabis and help in public was discussed. Jayme made a motion to approve ordinance 2023-9-11-2. Andy seconded the motion. AIF

The Clerks explained that although the council passed a fee reduction for those paying utility bills through auto-pay on the first of the year, the new online pay portal will automatically charge the customer for that fee. They also explained that Stearns Bank will no longer accept utility bill payments.

Jayme made a motion to set the 2024 preliminary levy at \$250,000.00. Seth seconded the motion. AIF. This is the same amount that was levied in 2023. The final levy amount cannot exceed \$250k.

Eric closed the session pursuant to MN Stat. 13D.05, subd. 3(a) to evaluate the performance of James Vouk.

Eric opened the session. Jayme made a motion to terminate James Vouk effective immediately. Tim seconded the motion. AIF

Eric closed the session pursuant to MN Stat. 13D.05, Subd. 2(b) for preliminary consideration of allegations against liquor store manager Jared Hillesheim.

Eric opened the session. Jayme made a motion to terminate Jared Hillesheim effective immediately. Andy seconded the motion. AIF

Additional agenda items/council member updates: N/A

Jayme made a motion to appoint a hiring committee with hiring authority to hire the new HMLS manager. The individuals will be Jayme, Kelly, and one other council member. Tim seconded the motion. AIF

Past Due Water Bills: Dave Hagemann, Duane Young, Hyatt House, LLC., Nicholas Schmidt, Greg Willenbring, Josh Krueger, Greg & Kyna Reiter.

Looking Forward:

Next Council Meeting: Monday, October 10th, 2023

City Hall will be Closed on September 14th and 15th for Clerk training, and on October 9th for Indigenous Peoples Day.

Central MN Tour of Manufacturing at Seitz Stainless and Two River's enterprise on October 7th.

Main Street Trick or Treat on October 31st.

Adjourn: Jayme made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. Andy seconded the motion. AIF