



**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
February 6, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

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

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

Staff Present: City Administrator: Scott Weske; City Clerk Moeller; City Attorney Thames; Public Works Director Diercks

Absent: None

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mayor Miner offered the following comments and updates:

Other than experiencing record warm temperatures, it had been fairly quiet in the City recently. He noted that it has been nice to see residents out walking and enjoying the warm weather.

He reported that there were updates from the previous week related to the Fire Department issues but stated those would be covered as a separate item later in the agenda.

He added that the Council had just finished a work session meeting at which they had discussed the fourth quarter 2023 financial report results, staffing for Public Works, and the planter baskets for the downtown area.

APPROVE AGENDA

A motion was made by Feldmann, seconded by Joyce, to approve the agenda as presented. Ayes: all.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda consisted of the following:

- A. Approve Minutes of January 16, 2024 City Council Work Session Meeting
- B. Approve Minutes of January 16, 2024 City Council Meeting
- C. Approve Vendor Claims and Payroll
- D. Receive 4th Quarter 2023 Revenues and Expenditures as of December 31, 2023, as presented
- E. Appoint Arlo Vande Vegte as a Volunteer Research/Legal Assistant to the City Attorney and Special Counsel in the Matter of Long Lake V. City of Orono
- F. Adopt Resolution No. 2024-07 Appointing Election Judges for the 2024 State Presidential Nomination Primary, Hennepin County Commissioner District 6 Special Primary, Hennepin County Commissioner District 6 Special General, State Primary, and State General Elections and Establishing an Absentee Ballot Board

- G. Adopt Resolution No. 2024-03 Approving DISH Ground Lease and Crown Castle Consent to Install Contemplated Improvements
- H. Adopt Resolution No. 2024-04 Accepting the Donation of Equipment Items to the City of Long Lake for the Long Lake Fire Department

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

OPEN CORRESPONDENCE

Kelly Grady, 271 Greenhill Lane – Ms. Grady commented that she wanted to reiterate her amplified concerns related to fire service. She stated that she cares deeply for the firefighters, the Long Lake Fire Department, the safety of the community, and the citizens that the Department serves. She noted that she feels that as the conflict regarding the future of fire services rages on, it puts the citizens at increased risk. She asked that the Council continue to work towards the goal of a shared services agreement with their neighbors. She encouraged citizens to engage in the process and write to the Council to show that they care about this vital service. She explained that she had already dedicated a year of her life to championing the Long Lake Fire Department and did not intend to stop.

BUSINESS ITEMS

A. Establish a Public Works Lead Maintenance Workers Position; Promote Don Laakkonen to the Position of Lead Maintenance Worker and Approve a Salary Step Increase

Public Works Director Diercks recalled that the Council had discussed this during the work session. He explained the request for establishing a Public Works Lead Maintenance Worker position and outlined some of the job duties that would go along with the role. He stated that he was also asking that Don “Luke” Laakkonen be promoted to that new position effective tonight. Mr. Laakkonen began working at the City in 1985 and is a 40-year employee of the Public Works Department. He added that Mr. Laakkonen is a very dedicated employee and knows the ins and outs of the City.

Mayor Miner pointed out that a 40-year employee is pretty unheard of in this day and age. He mentioned that it had come up during the discussion at the work session how good of a mentor Mr. Laakkonen has been to new employees and seasonal workers.

A motion was made by Kvale, seconded by Feldmann, to adopt Resolution No. 2024-05 establishing a Public Works Lead Maintenance Worker position and amending the City’s 2024 salary plan. Ayes: all.

A motion was made by Kvale, seconded by Feldmann, to adopt Resolution No. 2024-06 promoting Don “Luke” Laakkonen to the position of Public Works Lead Maintenance Worker and improving a salary increase as proposed. Ayes: all.

B. Request for City Participation in the Purchase of Battery Powered Extrication Tools for the Long Lake Fire Department

Fire Chief Heiland reviewed some of the recent equipment items purchased by the Long Lake Firefighters Relief Association and donated to the City for use by the Fire Department.

Deputy Chief Gonsier shared details related to the request for participation from the City in the purchase of battery powered extrication tools and how they would be used. He noted that there may be the opportunity to sell the existing equipment in order to recoup some of the money.

Council member Dyvik asked if this equipment would go on the new utility truck.

Gonsier responded that the equipment would go onto the existing utility truck and then would be transferred to the new truck when it arrives.

Mayor Miner asked if the equipment was essentially like the 'jaws of life' that people used to refer to.

Gonsier confirmed that it was essentially the same thing.

Council member Feldmann recalled that the old one used to be hydraulic with hoses dragging from the truck.

Gonsier agreed and noted that with the older version they were limited by the length of hose they had available. The new unit has a portable pump so they will not be limited by hose.

Council member Dyvik asked if the procedure for use of this equipment was different between a regular vehicle and an electric vehicle.

Gonsier explained that the difference would basically be knowing where and where not to cut an electric vehicle.

Mayor Miner read aloud language from the fire service contract with the City of Orono pertaining to purchases and explained that this would typically be categorized as a capital expense. He indicated that the last statement from the City of Orono regarding capital expenditures was from September 2022 where their City Administrator had written that Orono would not be approving the 2023 capital budget, were committed to ensuring that the Department had the equipment to perform their mission, and would be open to equipment purchases on a case by case basis. He stated that he felt this purchase was something that they could approach Orono with; however, with the ongoing legal issues he felt that may delay things. He commented that this would be equipment that the Department would want to continue to use after the contract expires and asked for the Council's opinion on purchasing this equipment as a City versus going to the City of Orono for participation.

Council member Feldmann stated that he would be in favor of moving ahead and contributing to the purchase of this equipment as a City.

Council member Kvale questioned how much the Relief Association was planning to contribute.

Council member Feldmann clarified that the Relief Association planned to contribute whatever the City does not contribute. He added that the reality is that this is a piece of equipment that will make the Department more effective.

The Council discussed the possible market value and costs that may be recouped from the sale of the old equipment.

City Clerk Moeller reviewed the rationale behind the proposed separate motions.

Council member Dyvik asked who owned the current extrication equipment.

Mayor Miner stated that he believed it was the City of Long Lake.

City Administrator Weske suggested that the Council could choose to have any funds that may come from the sale of the old equipment as a reimbursement into the 205 Fund, similar to what had happened with the radios.

Council member Dyvik highlighted that the staff report says that the City's contribution would come from Fund 462. He indicated that he thought that was also the fund that the new truck/engine would be coming from and expressed concern about zeroing out the account.

Weske confirmed that was the current plan and agreed that the fund would be negative.

The Council discussed possible City contribution amounts that they would be comfortable with for the purchase of the equipment.

Council member Dyvik voiced that he was just trying to be mindful that the City had committed a lot of money over the last year to purchases like the used engine and utility truck.

A motion was made by Feldmann, seconded by Miner, to authorize a City contribution in the amount of \$7,000 towards the purchase of powered extrication tools and batteries for U11. Ayes: all.

A motion was made by Feldmann, seconded by Miner, to adopt Resolution No. 2024-08 accepting a donation from the Long Lake Firefighters Relief Association to the City of Long Lake for the purchase of battery powered extrication tools for the Long Lake Fire Department. Ayes: all

Mayor Miner mentioned that during the work session the Council had received an update from Finance Director Nowezki who'd shared that the Fire Department, despite having record call volumes in 2023, appears to have come in under budget. He added that she still had to crunch a few numbers, but wanted to express his appreciation to the Fire Department leadership for their work to make that happen.

In other news, Heiland reported that they received a resignation today from a firefighter who is on St. Paul Fire full-time. The firefighter had wanted to give it a try but working two jobs with two young kids wasn't working for him and his family. His departure wouldn't really cost the City anything because he had come with his own equipment. The Department had also interviewed a new candidate last night who received good reviews. He concluded by sharing that the Department had 32 calls in the month of January.

C. Reschedule March 5, 2024 City Council Meeting Due to Presidential Nomination Primary (PNP) Election Day

Moeller stated that due to the Presidential Nomination Primary election, the City Council will need to reschedule their March 5, 2024 meeting. Staff is recommending that they reschedule for Wednesday or Thursday of the same week.

A motion was made by Feldmann, seconded by Miner, to reschedule the March 5, 2024 City Council meeting due to Presidential Nomination Primary Election Day to March 7, 2024. Ayes: all.

D. Updates Regarding Fire Department Matters

Mayor Miner reported that last week had been a busy one for both Council and staff. He and Council member Dyvik had attended the court ordered mediation with the City of Orono on January 30 which lasted from about 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Mayor Miner didn't feel that there were any real results that came out of the mediation session. Despite the City of Long Lake coming to the table prepared to compromise and meet halfway, efforts were not successful. On February 1, 2024 there was a court appearance for a follow up hearing with the Judge in the matter of City of Long Lake v. City of Orono to determine whether or not Orono has hindered the City of Long Lake and the Long Lake Fire Department when it came to recruiting and hiring for the Department; and whether they would hinder the Department's ability to operate out of Station 2 in the Navarre area. They had also brought forward what they believe were additional violations of the temporary injunction and order of contempt. He stated that both cities gave testimony during the hearing which began at 10:00 am and went to about 4:30 pm. Both sides were directed to submit summaries and written conclusions as of the end of business yesterday, which had been done. The Judge now has up to 90 days to rule on the matter, but in the past she had ruled within a few weeks. He reviewed possible outcomes and rulings that may come forward.

Council member Kvale expressed her appreciation to the people that took the time to testify and all the effort that went into it, including Mayor Miner and Chief Heiland.

Mayor Miner commented that he felt Chief Heiland did an excellent job and noted that they also called an expert witness who was the former Brooklyn Park Fire Chief; had also been the Interim Chief for the Excelsior Fire District around 2019; Fire Chief in Wichita Falls, Texas; and had been named the 2022 Fire Chief of the Year for the state of Texas. The witness was able to give testimony on things that people who are not in fire service would have a lot of knowledge about. Mayor Miner recalled that the courtroom seats were full with residents from both cities as well as staff and elected officials. He noted that the full City Council was able to attend. He thanked them for making time in their schedules because he felt it was good for them all to hear things directly and be able to get the full picture.

OTHER BUSINESS

Scheduling a Closed Session - Mayor Miner suggested planning for a Closed Session meeting to discuss the possible ruling related to the Fire Department contract issues with the City's legal team. Council member Kvale advised setting aside some possible dates for the meeting to prepare for officially scheduling it once the Judge's ruling arrives. Mayor and Council discussed possible meeting dates for a Closed Session. Moeller indicated that she would check legal counsel's availability for February 20, 27, and March 7, 2024 for a Closed Session meeting.

Rain Barrel Program – Council member Joyce indicated that she and Moeller will be working on putting together information about rain barrels that will be offered by the Long Lake Waters Association at a discounted rate for citizens who are interested. Moeller confirmed that she had not yet received a specific contact to refer interested residents to for requesting a rain barrel.

Park Board Liaison Report – Council member Joyce reported that the Park Board met last night and had recommended appointment of a new Chair and Secretary. She felt the Board had a really good

discussion about grants for park and trail projects. She shared some possible grant options and stated that the Board would like to be placed on an upcoming Council agenda. Moeller mentioned that they could potentially plan for joint discussion at the March 7, 2024 City Council work session, as long as that is not the night the Closed Session would be held. Council member Joyce noted that the grant applications were due March 29, 2024 so they would still have time, but would still have that as their deadline. Council member Dyvik asked if they may want to include the Orono Youth Hockey Association in the meeting related to a possible grant application for skating facility improvements at Holbrook Park. Council member Joyce commented that she felt the Council should talk about some ideas first and then share information with them. The Park Board had a lot of ideas including some cool concepts for revamping the rink and making it a really cool functional space for the summertime as well. Council member Dyvik noted that one thing that had come out of his and Weske's meeting with the OYHA is that the rink is not level, so grading the rink area to get it level would probably be a first step. Council member Joyce indicated that she believes the Park Board's ideas included repositioning the rink, paving, and piping underneath which could allow for a splash pad during the summertime. She gave a brief overview of some of the other ideas that were brought up during their discussion. Council member Dyvik recalled that he had also heard the suggestion of having hockey during the winter and pickleball during the summer months. Council member Joyce reiterated that she and the Park Board would bring more details to an upcoming work session for further discussion.

Streaming of Meetings - Moeller noted that they had experienced a few kinks during the early portion of the Council meeting, but tech support had been available via text to assist in resolving those issues to allow broadcasting a livestream of the meeting. Mayor Miner observed that the City had not really publicized the livestream capabilities yet. Moeller confirmed Mayor Miner was correct and added that she would like to have one more meeting where they can work out any additional bugs before they publicize the streaming option.

Listserv Changes - Mayor Miner sought an update on the upcoming City Listserv refresh. Moeller explained that she is working on migrating the Listserv email subscriber list to the platform offered by the City's new website and had sent out a message asking everyone to 'resubscribe'. Her goal is to discontinue the old platform by the end of the month, and she encouraged everyone to resubscribe to the new system.

ADJOURN

Hearing no objection, Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting by general consent at 7:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Weske
City Administrator