



**Regular City Council Minutes
Tuesday, March 12, 2024**

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Comprising a quorum of the City Council, the meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm with the following members present: Mayor George Deiss, Council Members , Mark Lunde, Wade Miller, and Dan Sartell. Council Member Jessie Gibbs was absent.

Consent Calendar:

- A. Claims Register Summary
- B. Monthly Financial Reports
- C. City Council Meeting Minutes:
 - a. March 12, 2024, Regular Meeting
- D. Action 24-20: Arbor Day Proclamation

Action Motion: Approved the consent calendar items.

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Sartell
Roll call vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell		

Unfinished Business

Action 24-12: Fire Relief Association Request to Increase Pension Benefits

Wadena Fire Relief Association (WFRA), Policy on Benefit Increases

A WFRA policy on benefit increases was created in 2014. The policy requires the relief association to maintain a pension balance of 110% or higher during an increase request.

Relief Association President Shawn Swenson updated the council that since the first quarter of the year the Fire Relief Fund is up an estimated 4.89% to approximately 112%. Councilmember Dan Sartell asked what makes up the fund calculation. Swenson states all liabilities vested towards pensions, plus the surplus. Councilmember Mark Lunde confirmed that 100% funded means the fund can cover all the liabilities towards retirement eligible workers. Fire Chief Cody Yglesias states the level of the fund is determined by how it is managed by the investor. Further reporting they have had positive fund balance success with Stifle, the current investor. Sartell asks if the increase is approved, can it be changed. Mayor Deiss states once an increase is given, it is guaranteed. Cody states the only financial risk to the city is if a market crash occurs and the fund falls below 90%, the City would need to provide the difference. WDA Director Dean Uselman states a statute was passed in 1970-1980 that allows the municipality to amortize a shortfall over 10 years. If the fund recovers, the city would not need to continue contributions towards the original shortfall. Minimizing the risk to the city.

City Administrator Kim Schroeder noted there is a current policy in place, that conflicts with any potential approved increase at the current level of the fund. She asks the council to amend the current policy or replace it with the Memorandum of Understanding that was sent to the council earlier that day.

Action Motion: Amend Fire Relief Association Policy to a Memorandum of Understanding with the ability to draw the fund down to 105%.

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Sartell
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Roll call vote: | Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell

Action 24-12: Fire Relief Association Request to Increase Pension Benefits

Action Motion: Approve increase to pension benefit from \$3,700 to \$3,900.

Moved by:	Sartell	Seconded by:	Miller
Roll call vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell		

New Business:

Resolution 2024-16: Sourcewell Community Impact Funds Grant, Sirens

Chief Plautz reports there are currently two operating sirens. With the town expanding the city is lacking outdoor emergency notification siren coverage.

Sourcewell has a community impact funding grant ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000 that the city can apply for by the end of May. She reached out to Federal Signal Corporation for a quote. Purchasing three sirens, five poles from the city electric department, and twelve batteries totals \$60,630; \$10,630 over the \$50,000 Sourcewell grant maximum.

If awarded the grant, she proposes buying three sirens; two large and one small and relocating the two that are already in operation. The smallest one would be installed near the golf course. Chief Plautz will make requests to local community non-profits to contribute to assist in covering the cost overage. Plautz also notes that the sirens will need to be serviced every four years estimated at \$3,000 and will be added to the budget.

Action Motion: Approve resolution for Sourcewell Community Impact Funds Grant, Sirens.

Moved by:	Miller	Seconded by:	Lunde
Roll call vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell		

Resolution 2024-17: MRES, GRIP Grant for SCADA System

Utilities Superintendent Dave Evans reports this grant was applied for on behalf of the City by Minnesota Energy Resources. The system makes your distribution more efficient. They have been looking at getting a SCADA system for three years. The system was budgeted for two years ago but opted not to purchase until now due to inability to get material and not having correct water nodes. MRES has secured the \$95,000 grant with a 55% contribution and 45% local cost participation. The city is responsible for \$42,750. Evans states \$130,000 is in the budget.

Action Motion: Approve resolution supporting the MRES, GRIP Grant for SCADA system with city matching funds of \$42,750.

Moved by:	Sartell	Seconded by:	Miller
Roll Call Vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell		

Action 24-21: Relief Association Grass Rig Purchase

Relief Association President Shawn Swenson reports that the Relief Association has accumulated enough gambling proceed funds to purchase and donate a \$50,000 Grass Rig and additional equipment of \$30,000 for a total amount of \$80,000. The current rig is 34 years old. Council member Miller asks if the 1990 grass rig has any value. Shawn estimates around \$3,000. The association intends to build out the new grass rig over the next year and will hold on to the current one until then.

The relief association has met and approved a recommendation to the council.

Action Motion: Approve the donation from Wadena Relief Association to purchase a Grass Rig pickup with additional equipment up to \$80,000.

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Sartell
Vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell		

Action 24-22: Fire Dept, Appoint Nathan Biederman as 1st Asst Chief

Fire Chief Cody Yglesias reports that Matt Rousslang retired from 1st Asst position on 12/31/23. Two applications were received for the position with a recommendation to appoint Biederman.

Action Motion: Hire Nathan Biederman as 1st Asst Chief, contingent on successful background check and a one-year probation period.

Moved by:	Sartell	Seconded by:	Lunde
Vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell		

Action 24-23: Astera, Hwy 71 Underground Tunnel Removal

MnDOT is requiring Astera to remove their underground tunnel connecting the Wesley Building with the Legacy campus. With Astera's current projects, CEO Joel Beiswenger reports the removal is coming at a time when their balance sheet is overleveraged. Beiswenger asks the city to take on the project as special financing, with the idea that it would be charged back to Astera through a special assessment, costing the City nothing over time.

City Administrator Kim Schroeder spoke with bond counsel and reviewed options for the city to combine the tunnel removal with the city's 2025 Highway 71 project. Bond counsel recommended the easiest option is to receive 100% special assessment and waiver of appeal rights from Astera through Chapter 429 Petition for 100% Assessment Financing. Beiswenger has signed and provided the required agreement.

It's also confirmed with bond counsel this will not affect the City's bond rating or the ability to obtain bonds in the future.

Utilities Superintendent Dave Evans asks Joel if the plan is to have city engineers on the project, he says they are open to doing whatever the city requires of them.

Schroeder suggests that Astera hire their own engineers and work with MnDOT to avoid any miscommunication.

Action Motion: Approve the City to take on the Astera tunnel removal in conjunction with the 2025 Highway 71 project with the cost being financed through the city through special assessment to Astera Health.

Moved by:	Sartell	Seconded by:	Miller
Vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell		

Action 24-24: 940 Elm Ave NW, Right-of-Way Use Agreement

WDA Director Dean Uselman reports the homeowners have had a failing septic system for the past two years. There was discussion about replacing the system during the Greenwood Avenue reconstruction, however, that didn't happen. Due to the size of the lot and the requirements of space between the well and the drain field, they can't meet the distance requirements on the lot. In addition, the proximity to city utilities isn't financially feasible for extension and hookup. They are asking to be able to encroach into the right-of-way boulevard. There is approximately 34 ft of grass area between the property line and the gravel street. Uselman met with the plumber completing installation and city attorney Jeff Pederson. Pederson recommends the City offer a Use Agreement for the easterly portion of the right-of-way with the proposed mound from the north end of the row of trees, 50 feet.

In the future, if the city extends utilities, they will have to connect to city utilities and the Use Agreement will be removed.

Action Motion: Approve a Right of Way Use Agreement for private sewer septic system installation at 940 Elm Ave NW.

Moved by:	Miller	Seconded by:	Lunde
Vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell		

Action 24-25: Roach Petition to Vacate Streets, Call for Public Hearing

WDA Director Dean Uselman received a petition from Roach Development to vacate streets and utility easements in Folkestad's East Addition. The only action at this time is to set a date for a public hearing. This is similar to other projects Roach has done with prior developments. They will be responsible for street paving, maintenance, and utilities.

Action Motion: Approve calling for a public hearing at the May 14th 2024 regular council meeting for Petition to Vacate Streets and Utility Easements in Folkestad's East Addition.

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Miller
Vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell		

Action 24-26: Library Elevator Maintenance Agreement

Action Motion: Approve the Library Elevator Maintenance Agreement

Moved by:	Sartell	Seconded by:	Lunde
Vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell		

Meeting Open to the Public at 5:56pm: No one present.

Department Reports:

Public Works Department – Dan Kovar

- Had inquiries from people about street sweeping. Dan reported the sweeper is being repaired and waiting for parts. Street sweeping will be completed once repaired.

Utilities Department - Superintendent David Evans

- Nothing to report.

Wadena Development Authority and Planning & Zoning – Dean Uselman

- P&Z Assistant was out of the office this past week due to a personal injury with the intent to return in a week.
- Interests in lots at the new Pinewood Estates development continue. Currently, four different parties are looking into 5 lots.
- Working with a couple of other parties on lots in the business park.
- Has a showing of the old library building, the prospective buyers were impressed the first time they saw it.
- Councilmember Dan Sartell asked Dean about the piles of wood inside Pinewoods Estates. Dean says the Fire Department is working to get them burned. He hopes to have them cleaned soon.

Police Department – Naomi Plautz

- Past officer Dennis Henriksen passed away last week, his celebration of life is on Monday morning.
- Has received inquiries from other law firms expressing interest in becoming the city's criminal prosecuting attorney. It was noted that Jeff Pederson and Jacilyn Zemke are the current criminal attorneys, but it is uncertain what the plans in the future are. A resolution has been

passed already in 2024 appointing Jacilyn Zemke and Jeff Pederson as city attorneys, but it is unclear when Jeff is going to officially retire in June 2024. The council asked Naomi to collect RFPs from other firms and report back to the council.

Fire Department – Cody Yglesias

- Not Present

Wadena Liquor Store – Tim Booth

- Not Present

Maslowski Wellness and Research Center – Lisa Anderson

- Not Present

Whitetail Run Golf Course – Kevin Ross

- Not present.

City Administrator – Kim Schroeder

- Noted that there were four fire calls on timecards last pay period, none of which were billable. She added that last year there was a revenue line item for Fire Calls, the Chief informed Kim that none of the fire calls for 2023 were billable. Schroeder recommends setting a meeting to discuss and review billable calls.
- Reports that senior banners will go in Burlington Northern Park this year, not the city light poles.

Council Reports:

Dan Sartell: Asked about the Highway 10 and 9th Street LRIP State grant. Administrator Schroeder noted that movement on the grant heavily depends on if the language gets changed in the legislature.

Dan would like to be notified if there are future meetings on highway projects that he can sit in on.

Asked how the golf superintendent hiring process is going. Administrator Schroeder reports that the job has been offered to candidates that have declined. There have been applications received, but from underqualified candidates. She reports that Golf Course Manager Kevin Ross has a plan in place if a Superintendent is not hired in the short term.

Wade Miller: Nothing to Report

Mark Lunde: Nothing to report.

Jessie Gibbs: Not present.

Mayor's Report:

George Deiss:

- There was discussion on whether the new Highway 71 lighting will light the walking trail. He is concerned about having enough light over there. Dave Evans thinks that the area will get a lot of light wash from surrounding businesses, and notes that it is something that can be added later.
- Todd Wadena is having an annual open house, invitations were extended.

Upcoming Meetings:

March 12, 2024, Regular City Council Meeting

April 17, 2024, 3:00 pm, Local Board of Adjustment and Equalization

Adjournment

Action Motion: Unanimously adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Moved by: Miller

Seconded by: Lunde

Vote : Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell

Kim Schroeder, City Administrator

George Deiss, Mayor