222 2nd Street SE
Wadena, MN 56482

Regular City Council Minutes
Tuesday, December 10th, 2024

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER AND 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, Dan Sartell, and Mac Nelson.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Action Motion: Approved the consent calendar items.

A. Claims Register Summary
B. Monthly Financial Reports
C. City Council Meeting Minutes:
   a. October 29, 2024, Work Session
   b. November 12, 2024, Regular Meeting
D. Action 24-93: Approve Renewing Liquor, Beer, and Wine Licenses
E. Action 24-94: Approve renewing 3.2 Beer Licenses
F. Action 24-95: Approve Renewing Tobacco Licenses
G. Action 24-96: Approve Renewing Commercial Refuse Licenses
H. Action 24-97: Approve Renewing Tattoo Licenses
I. Action 24-98: Approve Renewing Massage Licenses
J. Action 24-99: Approve Renewing Kennel Licenses
K. Action 24-103: Approve Renewing Commercial Salvage License
L. Resolution 2024-35: Designating Annual City Elections Polling Place

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

PUBLIC HEARING

The Truth in Taxation hearing began at 6:00 pm and closed at 6:07 pm.

The meeting focused on recent increases in property values. One attendee raised a question about high residential valuation hikes, including sustainability of these increases. It was explained that the county assessor’s office manages property values. However, it’s the understanding that increases are likely due to state statute mandated adjustments counties must follow. Actual taxes for some residents remained stable or saw modest increases.
Since the county auditor’s office regulates property valuations it was relayed the process for any valuation disputes need to be addressed with the county or at the annual Board of Appeals annually in April.

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Miller
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Nelson, Sartell		

OLD BUSINESS

Action 24-92: Approve moving forward with cost estimates and public assessment hearing for Lincoln/8th/10th Avenue infrastructure project.			
Roach Development was contacted following the November meeting and confirmed their need to continue the access point from their development to Lincoln Ave. Also expressing their willingness to pay their share of the project. The city engineer provided an initial bid in early 2024, however, costs for 2025 are expected to increase. The project involves approx. eight property owners, it is unknown at this time what the City will be responsible for. Council members debated whether to proceed with a public hearing and assessment process. The consensus was to obtain cost estimates per property owner from the engineer and hold a public hearing input from property owners.			
Moved by:	Sartell	Seconded by:	Lunde
Roll Call Vote:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell, Nelson		

NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance 250: Approved the 2025 Fee Schedule as presented, Second Reading.			
Updates noted from the first reading are changes to the fire department fee schedule. After review and billing practice discussions between Administrator Schroeder and Chief Yglesias it is recommended to continue the ability to bill for actual firefighter hours from roll call as a minimum. However, billing would still be on a case-by-case basis. Situations occur that may not be billable for example good-faith calls, if someone calls passing by a scene and there's no one to invoice for a false alarm. The new structure includes no charge for the first half-hour, $250 for the second half of the first hour and $500 for each additional hour thereafter with no maximum. False alarm fees were simplified, moving away from a tiered system and recommended to charge both residential and commercial property owners $500 per occurrence after three or more false alarms. This change aims to encourage residents to call in emergencies without fear of being charged, while still addressing frequent or perpetual false alarm offenders. The second reading was held with the fire department changes agreed to.			
Moved by:	Nelson	Seconded by:	Sartell
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Nelson, Sartell		

Ordinance 251: Amending City Code, Chapter 70 Traffic Regulations, Section 70.06 Relating to Special Vehicles, First Reading.
The update includes removing language requiring permits for UTVs and ATVs. As well as aligning travel times with the snowmobile ordinance between sunrise and sunset addressing concerns from citizens to allow commute after daylight. The updates allow travel at nearly any time, provided the vehicle has proper lighting. The first reading was held.

Action 24-100: Approve the purchase of 40 Golf Cars from Alexandria Golf Cars, LLC for a total of $192,161.20 with 5-year amortization, 2.5% interest rate internal loan from the Electric Fund.
Two quotes were received, Alexandria Golf Cars, Alexandria MN and Versatile Vehicles, Inc., Prior Lake MN.

The discussion centered on the purchase of 40 new gas powered golf cars from Alexandria Golf Cars for $252,161.20, less $60,000 trade-in of the current cars, for a total of $192,161.20. Although Versatile Vehicles was slightly lower, Ross recommended Alexandria Golf Cars for the following reasons: long standing relationship, reliability, their four-year full warranty with same-day replacements agreement, and a local vendor.
It was noted that this approach replaces a leased option, and the cars typically pay for themselves in approx. one year.
The recommendation was to finance the purchase through an internal loan from the electric fund, 5-year amortization at 2.5% interest rate, with payments September 1 each year. Utility Director Evans is aware of the internal loan.

Moved by:	Miller	Seconded by:	Sartell
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell, Nelson		

Action 24-101: Approve hiring Cris Risberg as full-time Golf Course Superintendent, Grade 6, Step 1 and allow a no cost seasonal campground lot.

Cris Risberg was interviewed and accepted the position contingent on council approval. Risberg has 15 years of experience with Glencoe Golf Club and holds a pesticide license. Risberg will be commuting from Watkins and requests a zero cost seasonal campground lot at Sunnybrook Campground where he can reside during the work week as part of his hiring package. Full hookup fees for a campground site is $660 per month, totaling approx. $3,000 per season. No cash or payroll transactions will be involved with this agreement.
A background check has been completed with no disqualifying records.

Moved by:	Sartell	Seconded by:	Lunde
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell, Nelson		

Action 24-102 : Approve hiring Nicholas Soroko as volunteer paid-on call firefighter.

Chief Yglesias recommends Nicholas Soroko as a final candidate on the hiring list. The hire is contingent on a successful drug and physical agility test.
A background check has been completed with no disqualifying records.

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Miller
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell, Nelson		

Resolution 2024-36: Approve certification of November 5, 2024, election results.

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

Resolution 2024-37: Approve 2025 Part-Time wages as presented.

A 3% cost of living increase was proposed, following past practice and what full-time employees received for 2025.
Discussion was held regarding election judge pay. One judge shared concern to Administrator Schroeder that compensation seemed low compared to other cities. Mayor Deiss noted that Wadena provides food and beverages throughout the day. It was also shared that other part-time employees, such as lifeguards, undergo more training and are paid less. A few election judges may feel underpaid, but a historical perspective is that serving as an election judge is a civic duty, much like serving on a jury or a board.

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

Resolution 2024-38: Approve the final 2025 levy at $487,340.00, a $36,064 increase from 2024, 7.99%.

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

Resolution 2024-39: Approve general and enterprise fund budgets for fiscal year beginning January 1, 2025, and ending December 31, 2025, all funds combined.

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

Resolution 2024-40: Approve certifying 2024 miscellaneous unpaid accounts receivables to property taxes.

Each year the city encounters unpaid accounts receivables. State law allows municipalities to assess debts to the property. A $50 administration fee is also added. The list of these assessments was provided, with private data and parcel numbers redacted to maintain privacy.

Moved by:	Sartell	Seconded by:	Miller
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell, Nelson		

Resolution 2024-41: Approve certifying updated TCHC Utility Extension Project Assessments for appellants per court order.

Per court order, appellants were given the choice to receive their principal and interest back. Some requested both the principal and interest, while others only sought interest refunds. This resolution outlines the updated terms for those who received returns specifying principal to start 2025 and interest to start in 2026. The county will receive the updated resolution to begin the new amortization schedules accordingly.

Moved by:	Miller	Seconded by:	Sartell
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Sartell, Nelson		

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT 5:33 PM

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Public Works Department - Dan Kovar: The Folkestad Park trail project is progressing well, though it required more fill than anticipated. Additional fill has been hauled and pushed over the past week; Class 2 material will be added soon. Weather permitting, the trails should be completed and ready to open in two weeks. Benches donated by the Folkestad family will be delivered and installed on prepared concrete pads.

Utilities Department - Superintendent David Evans: A circuit switcher damaged in a June thunderstorm has finally arrived and is expected to be installed next week at the substation. Insurance will cover the costs, and the claim can be closed out once the work is completed. However, an initial board failure has delayed the process slightly. The street decorations look fantastic, and the crew has been commended for their efforts.

Authority and Planning & Zoning - Dean Uselman: Working on getting over legal hurdles regarding the Bakery and what happened there. Reported on the buckwheat growers building, progress is being made on getting that cleaned up.

Police Department - Naomi Plautz: Parade of lights went well. Looking forward to Shop with a Hero next.

Fire Department - Cody Yglesias:

- The department is dealing with a tank leak on a truck, it remains operational for now, however plans are underway to explore replacement. Considering consolidating two units to one.

- Sean Swenson has resigned as 3rd assistant chief. Applications are open for a January replacement.
- The Wadena Fire Relief Association donated approximately $35,000 to complete new equipment on a rescue truck purchased earlier this year.

Wadena Liquor Store - Tim Booth: Not Present.

Maslowski Wellness and Research Center - Lisa Anderson: Reported the water slide renovation should be complete mid-January.

Whitetail Run Golf Course - Kevin Ross: Looking into selling pull tabs and E-tabs at the golf course beginning the 2025 season through the Firemen's Relief Association.

City Administrator - Kim Schroeder:

- MnDOT approved the city's (November meeting) request for rapid reflection beacon (RRFB) crossing arm additions to the Highway 71, Bryant Avenue, and Aldrich Avenue Resolution consenting to remove the current signal (at Bryant Avenue) and install RRFB's and crossing arm signals. Cost estimates were not provided, however, as far as it's known MnDOT requirements for cities under 5,000 in population is estimated to be a 90% MnDOT and 10% local cost share split. More information will be updated as it becomes available.
- Three TIF districts are set for decertification December 31, 2024. The taxable values and revenues will be added back to the city, county, and schools' taxable income.
- To address delays in legal work, the city will implement an on-site attorney office space for three hours weekly. Wednesday mornings seem to work best at this time. The copier room will be converted into a mini office, with minor renovations planned. The initiative aims to improve efficiency by dedicating time to the city. The cost should not exceed past routine expenses and will be reviewed quarterly.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Dan Sartell: Suggests removing the dedicated parking spaces in front of commercial apartments on Jefferson St/TH71, observing tenants rarely utilize the spaces during daytime hours. With increased activity from the new dance studio and improved programming at the Cozy theater, his opinion is that the unused spaces are no longer justified. Council members continued discussions regarding if the Housing Redevelopment Association (HRA) agrees. Sartell spoke with Director Maria Marthaler and reported she didn't oppose. Council member Lunde reported he was at an HRA board meeting and was discussed, the board asked if cones and signage could be used temporarily when needed. Council members didn't oppose and asked this to be added to January's regular meeting agenda.

Mark Lunde: Nothing to report.

Wade Miller: Participated in the Holiday Parade and helped out at the Christmas Festival.

Mac Nelson: Helped out at the Thanksgiving community dinner, encouraged others to participate as well. Reported 280 local meal locations were distributed by volunteers.

Mayor George Deiss: Updated that approximately $1.3 million of library donations are currently invested at the Initiative Foundation (IF) with the current return rate at 3%. The foundation has asked to transfer the funds to the Friends of the Library. This could allow for potentially higher investment returns under a local investor or possibly through the city's Schwab portfolio (must be under the Friends of the Library) with returns currently averaging 5%. $20,000 must remain in an endowment fund at IF. The Friends of the Library are looking into the best options to maximize growth and will report back to the council.

Action Motion: Unanimously Adjourned at 6:07pm.

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Nelson
Vote in favor:	Deiss, Lunde, Miller, Nelson, Sartell		

George Deiss, Mayor

Attest: ______________________________
Kim Schroeder, City Administrator