

**City of Wadena
Regular City Council Minutes
Tuesday, December 12, 2023**

1. Call to Order

The Wadena City Council held a regular meeting on Tuesday, December 12, 2023. Mayor Deiss called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Comprising a quorum of the City Council, the following members were present: George Deiss, Wade Miller, and Dan Sartell. Absent were members Mark Lunde and Jessie Gibbs.

3. Consent Calendar

- A. Claims as Presented for Payment
- B. City Administrator's Monthly Financial Report
- C. City Council Meeting Minutes:
 - 1. November 14, 2023, Regular Meeting
 - 2. November 27, 2023, Special Meeting
- D. Resolution 2023-38: Designating Annual City Elections Polling Place
- E. Resolution 2023-39: Accepting Donations
- F. Action 23-94: Accept Lloyd Lanz Retirement Notice
- G. Action 23-95: Approve Renewing Liquor, Beer, and Wine Licenses
- H. Action 23-96: Approve Renewing Tobacco Licenses
- I. Action 23-97: Approve Renewing Commercial Refuse Licenses
- J. Action 23-98: Approve Renewing Commercial Salvage Licenses
- K. Action 23-99: Approve Renewing Tattoo Licenses
- L. Action 23-100: Approve Renewing Massage Licenses
- M. Action 23-101: Approve Renewing Kennel Licenses

Action Motion: Approved the consent calendar items.

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

4. Public Hearings

Item A – Astera Health Utilities Extension Project Assessment

CEO Joel Beiswenger was present and had no dispute or questions, being fully aware the assessment was going to occur.

Action Motion: Approved closing the public hearing at 5:08 p.m.

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

Item B – Miscellaneous Unpaid Utility and Accounts Receivable Assessments

Kathleen Schmitz states she doesn't have the funds to pay the nuisance property cleanup fees. She mentioned she receives assistance; it was suggested she provide the outstanding balance and/or 2024 tax statement to them for payment. If they won't pay, she's still obligated through taxes after the first of the year.

Action Motion: Approved closing the public hearing at 5:09 p.m.

Moved by: Sartell

Seconded by: Miller

Vote: Deiss, Miller, Sartell

5. Unfinished Business

Item A – Action 23-92: Hire Finance Director for Retirement Replacement

Action Motion: Approved hiring Penny Poling, start step, \$34.98 per hour, increase to Step 1 following 3-month progressive employment, probation period, 6-months, part-time starting December 13, 2023, full-time starting February 1, 2024.

Moved by: Miller

Seconded by: Sartell

Vote: Deiss, Miller, Sartell

6. New Business

Item A – Resolution 2023-40: Certifying Astera Health Utility Extension Project Assessment

CEO Joel Beiswenger thanked the city for working with Astera on the project.

Action Motion: Approved Resolution 2023-40, Certifying Astera Health Utility Extension Project Assessment amount of \$3,543,450.00.

Moved by: Sartell

Seconded by: Miller

Roll call vote: Deiss, Miller, Sartell

Item B – Resolution 2023-41: Hwy 10 Underground Utilities Feasibility Report and Setting the Date for Public Hearing

Bolten and Menk provided a preliminary feasibility report with three options. The council chose recommended option 1.

Action Motion: Approved Resolution 2023-41, Hwy 10 Underground Utilities Feasibility Report with Option 1, and Setting the Date for Public Hearing for January 9, 2024.

Moved by: Miller

Seconded by: Sartell

Roll call vote: Deiss, Miller, Sartell

Item C – Resolution 2023-42: 2023 Misc Unpaid Utility and Accounts Receivable Assessments

Action Motion: Approved Resolution 2023-42: 2023 Misc Unpaid Utility and Accounts Receivable Assessments.

Moved by: Sartell

Seconded by: Miller

Roll call vote: Deiss, Miller, Sartell

Item D – Ordinance 247: Adopting the 2024 Fee Schedule

The sewer fund provided two rate structures for consideration. The first proposal is a 10% rate increase on all service charges. The increases wouldn't be enough to support expenses, including depreciation, with a proposed net loss of (\$127,123).

The second is a 20% rate increase on all service charges. The increases would be nearly enough to support expenses, including depreciation, with a proposed net loss of (\$6,163). It was also relayed that a cash deficit exists in the books and needs to be considered. The council chose the 20% rate increase and will review it again during next budget discussions.

Action Motion: Approved Ordinance 247, Adopting the 2024 Fee Schedule with the sewer budget with the 20% rate increase structure.

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

Item E – Resolution 2023-43: Adopting the Final 2024 Tax Levy

Action Motion: Approved Resolution 2023-43: Adopting the Final 2024 Tax Levy.

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

Item F – Resolution 2023-44: Adopting a Budget for Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2024, and Ending December 31, 2024

Action Motion: Approved Resolution 2023-44: Adopting a Budget for Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2024, and Ending December 31, 2024.

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

Item G – Action 23-102: Hire Part-Time Police Officer Keith Waaraneimi

Action Motion: Approved hiring part-time police officer Keith Waaraneimi.

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

Item H – Action 23-103: Bad Debt Write-Offs

The city has attempted to collect accounts throughout the year, at year end some are deemed uncollectible. It was asked if the city should use a collection agency. The city has historically not as it keeps the amounts on record and collects when the debtor is found or moves. This way the city receives all or most of the debt, rather than losing some principal to a collection agency.

Action Motion: Approved writing off bad debt totaling \$6,728.20.

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

7. Meeting Open to the Public at 5:45 pm

Duke Harrison of Mason Brothers requests the council consider rescinding the Hwy 10 municipal consent resolution contending the new design will be a cost to his business at \$60,000 annually. Further stating his frustrations with the way MnDOT and the city didn't support or work with him on his segment and that the new entrance creates an unsafe pedestrian crossing on the county's trail along his property. Also stating the city and MnDOT has not worked in good faith.

Mayor Diess and Administrator Schroeder disagreed with Mr. Harrison's position of bad faith negotiation efforts. Noting that the city and MnDOT have spent numerous hours and meetings discussing design concepts that could work for Mason Brothers. Deiss and Schroeder also shared that MnDOT worked with Mr. Harrison and Todd-Wadena Electric to design a shared driveway concept on Todd-Wadena Electric's property off Highway 10 that would work to Mr. Harrison's benefit. Unfortunately, a mutual agreement between Harrison and Todd-Wadena Electric was unable to be achieved.

Item – Truth-in-Taxation Open to the Public at 6:00 pm

No one present, no discussion.

Action Motion: Approved closing the public hearing at 6:00 p.m.

Moved by: Sartell

Seconded by: Miller

Vote: Deiss, Miller, Sartell

8. Department Reports

Item A – Public Works Department – Dan Kovar

- Continue to review and plan highway 10 project details.
- With no snow the department has been able to perform other items such as tree trimming.

Item B – Utilities Department - Superintendent David Evans

- Notice requirements will be provided for utility rates.
- A highway 10 utility meeting was held regarding elevations, final plans, and timeline of project. Updated the council that utility easements are necessary and may have to get creative to achieve property owners signing off on the easements. It may be a cost to the city. Permits will be necessary, and Evans hopes everything can be in in conjunction with the project.

Item C - Wadena Development Authority and Planning & Zoning – Dean Uselman

- Not present.

Item D - Police Department – Naomi Plautz

- Due to the school's resent failed referendum the school discontinued the Safety Resource Officer (SRO) effective December 31, 2023. This reduces the city's revenue by approximately 65% of a full-time officer's salary and benefits. SRO officer Grabe will no longer report to WDC school and report as a full-time officer for the department going forward.
- Plautz presented a newly implemented state Intense Comprehensive Peace Officer Education and Training grant Program to financially support individuals interested in becoming a peace officer. The program offers a grant for employment and education financing for any individual with a credited degree that wants to take the peace officer course. The individual would be employed by an employer [the city] and paid full-time wages while going to school to offset cost of living expenses and education and training expenses covered.
Plautz introduced the idea to allow time to research and understand the program before bringing it to the council for a decision.

Item E - Fire Department – Cody Yglesias

- Not present.

Item F - Wadena Liquor Store – Tim Booth

- Not present.

Item G - Maslowski Wellness and Research Center – Lisa Anderson

- Not present.

Item H - Whitetail Run Golf Course – Kevin Ross

- Not present.

Item I - City Administrator – Kim Schroeder

- Would like the council to consider adding a personnel committee to the annual committee, board, commission designation authority.

Item J – Council Reports**Dan Sartell:**

- Questioned the Buckwheat Growers building on Aldrich Ave as a nuisance. Administrator Schroeder explained the WDA has been in contact with the owner and the owner has not taken care of it. Staff will look into the nuisance ordinance and next steps.
- Questioned the trailer park on Jefferson St and what's happening with the empty trailers. It was relayed that the owner is trying to sell the park. The trailers are unoccupied with no known nuisances. There's nothing the city can do unless there's a nuisance or violation of ordinance. No one is aware of anything to date.
- Questioned where the nuisance ordinance update request of his is at. Administrator Schroeder stated last she knew he (Sartell) and attorney Pederson were finalizing details to bring back for council consideration. She asked Sartell if he wanted to reach out to Pederson or if she should. Sartell asked Schroeder to reach out.
- Questioned where the new website design is at. Assistant Administrator Steidler-Thompson updated that it's nearing completion and Apptegy platform should go live end of December or beginning of January.

Wade Miller: Nothing to report.

Mark Lunde: Not present.

Jessie Gibbs: Not present.

Item K – Mayor's Report – George Deiss

- Reminded and mentioned the \$5,000 5-Wings Arts Council grant dollars are still unspent with a deadline of June 2024. A creative community group is meeting to come up with ideas and a plan in the hopes more state and federal grant funds will be available to maximize ideas. Current ideas are murals and/or hanging planters.
- Board, committee, and commission appointments will be on January's regular meeting. He updated the council that his term at Kitchigami library is up and cannot serve another. Someone will have to take that over. Council member Sartell asked if the appointments list can be sent out for review, Administrator Schroeder will do that.

9. Upcoming Meetings

A. January 9, 2024, Regular City Council Meeting

10. Adjournment

Action Motion: Unanimously adjourned at 6:11 p.m.

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



Kim Schroeder, City Administrator



George Deiss, Mayor