**Willow River City Council Meeting**

January 4, 2021

Approved March 1, 2021

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the Willow River City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, January 4, 2021 via WebEx and at Willow River City Hall.

**Council Present:** Brent Switzer, Chris Ketchmark, Kevin McGreanor and Vickie Whitehouse and Sheldon Johnson.

**Staff Present:** Diane Nelson and Kathi Bennett.

**Others Present:** John Mikrot, Gerard Bennett

**Oath of Office –** Chris Ketchmark was sworn into office as Councilmember. Kevin McGreanor was also sworn in as Councilmember.

**Approval of the Agenda:** Kevin makes a motion to approve the consent agenda. Chris seconded.

Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark - yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor.

**Willow River Fire Department, Gerard Bennett**- Runs to date: Fire – 0, EMS – 1, and 0 other. Back Hall had an electrical issue and it was repaired. They worked with MN Power and got it back up and running and fixed. The department trained with Essentia on EPPI injections (instead of pens) and I-gels. EPPI injections are $3 instead of $600 per dose (for injections) and is reimbursed through Essentia. They also trained on I-gels which is for airways. The department must purchase original supply and then Essentia will resupply (may be grants available for original supply). The department is waiting for more information on getting old radios from the Sheriff’s Office. They assisted the Community Club with Fun with Santa and Meal deliveries for Christmas. Gerard said that there is one cadet in progress but it is not official yet and 1 new officer after COVID settles down. There are vaccinations available to the EMS to those who want them and they can sign-up. The Department is currently looking for grants for some new PPE. 2020 ended with 108 total runs. 22 fire calls, 85 EMS and 1 other. There were also 7 events, 47 trainings and 60 meetings.

Gerard brought up that there has been some interest in putting up a marquee sign in the garden area by City Hall at Hwy. 61 and Cty. Rd. 43. There would be no cost to the City other than electricity and the possibility of the Clerk keeping it updated. The garden club will also be asked and will have input on the design, etc. The Commercial Club and Fire Relief Association will also be approached to help to purchase the sign. Gerard asked for the City’s ok to proceed with this project. Vickie makes a motion to approve looking into putting up a marquee sign. Kevin seconded. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark - yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor.

Vickie brought up that we should look at the application for Fire Chief. Vickie makes a motion to approve Gerard as the Fire Chief for 2021. Kevin seconded. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark - yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor.

**Special Guest; Tom Jensen**- Annexation of property into City limits. Tom has given the City a petition to annex 4 properties into the City limits. They are PID 17.0110.00, 17.0107.00, 17.0105.00 and 17.0154.000. This is Tom’s and 2 other landowner’s petitions. Our City attorney had asked that they hire an attorney to work on their behalf. Tom said that he consulted his attorney and he said that there is no need for him to get involved. Vickie asked what was in it for the City. Tom said growth, increased tax revenue, and if the one parcel is lotted off, then there would be additional homes in the City and the school district. Tom stated that Kettle River Township has stricter zoning for smaller lots than within City limits. Therefore, Gary Novak can divide into more lots than in the township. Brent asked if he is up to date on our attorney’s response. The City received an email from our attorney advising that we secure a $10,000 bond prior to the annexation process to cover any expenses that accrue. Whatever is remaining at the end of the process will be returned to the landowners. Tom said that when he was on the Council, they have never had to do that before. Tom asked how they want to proceed. The Council needs to discuss it and consult our attorney before they can give Tom a definite answer on anything. Sheldon said that he is not against is but that we need to do it right. Tom would like to keep the process moving. Brent asked about the roads that need to be maintained. Tom said that the increased tax base would cover any roads. The Council asked about the 80 acres. How many lots does he intend to put in there? How many roads would be added to the City? The Council said that they want to table it and discuss it further before anything moves forward. Tom asked when they would discuss it again? Brent said that he would also like to discuss it with an attorney. They said that they would update Tom before the next meeting.

After Tom left the meeting, the Council discussed. Sheldon mentioned that we need to research what the benefits to the City are. Brent has been doing some of that. How many roads would we have to maintain? Brent said that what he learned that we would have to at least maintain a portion. Gary could add a development and have access to it via County Road 43 and not add Countryside Loop to his access. Sheldon said that he is for annexation as long as it doesn’t cost the City a lot of money. Chris said that we should know better what the intentions of the 80-acre parcel are. Sheldon said that we do have some zoning guidelines already in place that would need to be followed. Sheldon said that he feels we need an attorney to walk through the process with us step by step because no one on the Council has been through this before. Diane stated that there is a MN Statute that addresses this. The Council talked about previous annexations. Chris makes a motion to table this topic until the next meeting. Kevin seconded. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark - yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor. The Council discussed roads briefly.

The Council also briefly talked about Mike Bjerke. He has dissolved his LLC and will be working under Chelsie Troth with Troth LLC for the next year or so and then will be retiringHe recommended that we continue with Chelsie Troth who has experience in City law.

**Water and Sewer, John Mikrot –** Clint hit the water plant when he was plowing and did some minor damage. He reached out to John to let him know. John said that around the end of the month he was going to take the lights down. All of the supplies are in for Bradd’s property but Donny hasn’t come and gotten them yet. Brent asked about fixing the water plant. It is just outside damage. Sheldon felt that we have a good relationship working with Clint so we can trust him to fix it in a timely manner. Sheldon made a motion that we let Clint know to repair as needed. Kevin seconded. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark - yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor.

**City Clerk, Diane Nelson** – The Fire Department payroll is done. We are looking at the audit the week of the 25th of January. Kathi will be needed 1 extra day during that week of the audit as well. Harold from AMKO Advisors will be here regarding our USDA loans next month at the meeting. Brent had talked to Diane regarding the snowbank across from the bank and how we dealt with it in the past. He asked the Council what we did last time. It was mentioned that we just give Clint a call and see if he still has the ability to move it.

**Water and Sewer Billing, Katie Bennett** – Kathi processed bills on the 31st and sent out 149 bills, 27 were email. The total was $10,994.63. The late fees charged were $183.68. There is a new house on Lakeside Drive and they are hooked up now. The City had 2 different Secret Santa’s this year. There were 7 households that were either paid in full or in part by them. The Council was very thankful that there are people in our city that are so giving.

**Zoning – Sheldon**; nothing new to report.

**Dam Update – Vickie;** Rocks started going in today. They are thinking that they will be done by the 1st of February. They will then be back around May sometime after the spring thaw. They are confident that the lake level will come back up. Sheldon asked how close they will be getting to the culverts. Vickie said that she looked at the specs, but doesn’t remember. Sheldon also asked how many steps and Vickie said she thought 5. Vickie mentioned that the County plans on removing the box culverts on Hwy 61 and turning that into a bridge. The DNR is now requiring this. Brent mentioned that anyone on the Council that wants to go up there and see what’s going on or ask questions, that they can go as long as they have a hard hat.

**Old Business**

1. MN Power agreement – nothing new
2. Hydrant locks – nothing new
3. Liquor Ordinance – see attorney

**New Business**  -

1. Organizational Resolution – see attached. There was some discussion regarding newspaper and attorney. The Council also acknowledged that Troth Law is taking over for Bjerke Law. Vickie makes a motion to approve the organizational resolution. Kevin seconded. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark - yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor

1. Future meetings – Stay with what we are doing. The sound needs to be fixed. Diane said that she would work on it so it is fixed for next month.
2. Sheriff’s Contract- We approved it last month. Brent signed.
3. Fire Chief application- see above
4. Computer- Diane explained that in November our emailed was hacked. Cybert PC found malware on the PC and fixed it and it was running well. Then it started running really slow so I called Cybert’s. They thought that a Microsoft update was probably running in the background so they walked me through how to get that completed. Once it completed, I couldn’t open any of the apps on the PC which included CTAS. I took it back in and they tried to fix it and came to the conclusion that it would have to be totally reset. That would cost a few hundred dollars and since it is 5-6 years old, now would be the time to purchase a new one if we wanted to consider it. Diane had given the Council a bid in their packets to look over. Chris made a motion to purchase a new computer for the city office. Kevin seconded. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark - yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor.

1. Final 2021 budget- The final approved budget for the Council.

Motion made by Chris to adjourn the meeting. Kevin seconded. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Diane Nelson