**Willow River City Council Meeting**

April 6, 2020

Approved May 4, 2020

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the Willow River City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, April 6, 2020 via Webex and at Willow River City Hall.

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

**Staff Present:** Diane Nelson

**Others Present via Webex:** Alley McGreanor and Kathi Bennett

**Approval of the Agenda:** 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**- the Fire Department has had 26 runs so far this year. They are getting things switched over for grass fires since the snow is mostly gone. They have applied for the 2020 DNR grant that is 50/50 matching. The 2016 SCBA grant has been finished up. We received 4 portables with the 2019 DNR 50/50 matching grant and are in the process of finishing up the paperwork on that. We are still looking at a grant with Sandstone for radios with the Mutual Aid Association to upgrade radios. The Department did bring Jamie Schmidt on as a probationary member. The WRFD received donations of N95 masks, spray sanitizer, hand and surface wipes, gloves and pizzas. Everyone is pitching in and it is greatly appreciated. Gerard said that they have been filling out surveys and requests for PPE supplies, eye shields, masks and gowns. We will see what we get. The WRFD and EMS adopted the Standard Operating Guidelines during the pandemic that the Moose Lake Fire Department and EMS and Mercy ambulance had. They had a meeting with them to discuss guidelines. They are practicing social distancing and taking temperatures as well as sanitizing after each call. The Department wanted to thank everyone and the community for their support. Hydrant locks and bullards are on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic. Vickie made a motion to approve Jamie Schmidt being brought on in a probationary period. Kevin seconded. Roll Call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor.

**Water and Sewer, John Mikrot –** Diane gave an update that John had given her. The paperwork is in to McGuire Iron to paint the water tower. He also talked to Vessco and they are only doing emergency work right now but thought that maybe fall it could get done. He is going to start patching roads this week or next. They will be flushing hydrants the end of April. He is going to take those tires on Willow Street to the dump as well as our little refrigerator. He has started bringing the tower up to summer height. Sheldon brought up that we should leave those tires because he explained that MN Power could be using them while they are replacing poles in the area. He also asked if John has enough cold patch or if we needed to order hot patch. Diane said that she would check with him when she saw him again. Vickie stated that there were around 10 bags at the shop. Diane explained that she brought up the issue with the tires and John didn’t think that MN Power would be using them. She will talk to John. Kevin said that he would check with them since they are currently working by his house.

**City Clerk, Diane Nelson** – John Edwards who lives on Lakeside Drive said that a tree went down on Chipmunk Lane towards the park. He cut it up and put it off to the side of the road. We may need someone to clean up the wood. Sheldon said that he walked by within the last couple of days and everything looked fine. Jason Boyle and I spoke and they are still looking at fall for the dam. He said that the pandemic didn’t change their plans. There are some additional changes to the Family and Medical Leave Act concerning COVID-19. The main change is that any employee, regardless if they receive benefits or not, must be paid their average wages for two weeks if they are out sick due to the COVID-19 or to care for someone with it. Vickie asked if it has to be a confirmed case. Diane said that she could look into it. The CIP is still planning to come and help the Garden girls with cleaning up the flower areas. They asked if they could dump at Big Bend. Vickie said that she didn’t see a problem with it. Sheldon agreed. I had a request to use the City Park on June 13th for the MS bike-a-thon. I also had a request for Vacation Bible School the end of June. The Ragnar Relay is August 14-15 and they are asking permission to stop her again. Vickie mentioned that the Color run has been moved to May 9th. The Council was ok with the events. Diane asked if anyone had any questions on the Budget vs. Actual that I sent out. Sheldon had asked about some expenses in parks and that was for the lawn mowing. Sheldon asked if I had plenty of stuff to do now that the office is closed. I said that I have actually been busier since the outbreak because I need to keep up to date and there were some extra things due to it.

**Water and Sewer Billing, Katie Bennett –** Diane also gave the Council Kathi’s report. One of the things Kathi had was that many cities are not charging late fees and doing shut-offs until the pandemic is over. Of the people on the current shut off list, 2 are medical workers and one is an employee at a salon. Vickie made a motion that they do not shut anyone off or charge late fees through this. Kevin seconded. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Last month there were 145 bills sent out with 29 of them being email. There was one shut off and the billing was $12,349.69.

**Old Business**

1. Security system – have not heard.
2. MN Power agreement – have not heard.
3. Hydrant locks – nothing new
4. Maintenance worker – Diane mentioned that last month it sounded like there wasn’t much for someone to do and they asked Kathi to clean. If we don’t want to hire at this time, I will remove it from the agenda. The Council said to remove it.
5. Advertising for lawn mowing – Vickie said it should go in the paper ASAP. Sheldon mentioned that he thought that last month it was supposed to be advertised. Vickie agreed (I went back and listened to the minutes and it was said to advertise in April). The deadline should be the end of April so that we can approve it at the May meeting. Sheldon agreed. The deadline was decided to be April 30th by noon.
6. Stop sign – Kevin said that he could call Kevin Prachar at the school and see if something could get figured out. Sheldon also mentioned that Rick Frentress may also be able to help since he is the shop teacher.

**New Business**  -

1. Mayoral Proclamation and Declaration of Emergency and Resolution Declaring a Public Health Emergency – Chris makes a motion to approve Resolution 2020-2 Declaring a Public Health Emergency. Vickie seconded. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

1. Resolution for paying City Claims – Diane explained that this is to protect the City in case there isn’t a quorum or if Councilmembers and/or Clerk are sick that the bills can still get paid. They would then be approved at the next meeting. This is to be in effect only during the pandemic. Vickie makes a motion to approve Resolution 2020-3 Paying City Claims. Chris seconded. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

1. Liability coverage waiver – Diane said that in the past that we do not waive our liability coverage. Sheldon asked why we would want to waive it? He said that he has never seen this form before. Vickie agreed. Diane stated this is a form that we do every year around the time of our renewal. (In 2019 it went before the Council at the May meeting). Diane also stated that there have been Councilmembers that have attended the insurance meetings where it was discussed also. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

1. Board of Equalization – Diane stated that it is still going to happen but there are a couple of options. One is to teleconference the county and have it here or to hold it entirely remotely and we all conference in or we can cancel the meeting and it becomes an open book meeting and we lose the option of having it here for two years. Vickie asked if we were going to teleconference the county how that would work. Diane explained that it would work like it does with this Council meeting. If there are more than 10, we could make people wait outside. Vickie said that she doesn’t want to lose having it. Sheldon asked about having the meeting outside with social distancing. Diane thought we would still have the 10 people rule. Sheldon didn’t think that the 10 people would be an issue for the Board of Equalization. Chris mentioned that we could have the Council in the building and then one person at a time can come in. Mayor asked for a roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

1. Refund for overpayment on water/sewer on sold house – Mike Danelski sold a house to Artic Properties and he had overpaid the water/sewer bill. We need to refund him $51.75. Chris asked if he had any other properties that we could give that credit to? Kathi said that he didn’t. Sheldon said we should refund him then. Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

1. Letter to Squirrel Cage – The Mayor asked if everyone had had a chance to read it. Sheldon said that he thought it was supposed to be sent already. Brent said that he was the one that didn’t want it sent until it could be reviewed by the whole Council. Diane said that she would go back and review the recording. Diane asked if it should be sent from the Mayor or the Council. Vickie and Sheldon mentioned that it should be sent from the Council.
2. Quit claim deed with DNR approval – Diane heard back from Mike and he gave the go ahead to sign off on it. Sheldon said that he wanted to read the Quit claim deed. I mentioned that it has been several months that we have been dealing with this and that I had copies available. I said that I would send him a copy to review.
3. Liquor Ordinance – Brent asked if everyone had had the chance to review the one that he updated some of the verbiage on. Sheldon said that he would like to read through it. We will review it again next month.
4. Sewer at Big Bend – A neighbor had viewed someone going over to the property at Big Bend. The sewer and well were capped off when the property was destroyed. The neighbor saw that this person dumped something into the septic there. Kevin went over to check it and one of the sewer caps was missing. There was also something dumped into the sewer. Since there is no sewer cap there, there is a large hole that needs to be dealt with. Clint Fjosne said that he could collapse it if the City wanted to go that route. Vickie said that it would have to be checked out by MN Pollution Control before that can be done. She will contact FEMA to see what we can legally do. Chris mentioned that we should check with John Mikrot as well. Sheldon agreed with Vickie. Vickie wanted to make sure that we didn’t have any conflict with it being a scenic waterway. Sheldon thought we were well out of the 300 feet of the river or 1000 from a lake to have an issue with that. Vickie said that we don’t know what was dumped down there. Sheldon said that he agreed with Vickie on the fact that we shouldn’t be collapsing anything until we check things out first. Diane mentioned that Chris stated that John would know the rules and regulations regarding septic tanks and may have suggestions of how to cap it. It needs to be covered ASAP. Chris also asked if we could call the Sheriff’s Office and pursue trespassing charges. Kevin mentioned that the gate was not locked. Sheldon stated that there is also a “Day use” sign up there. If we want to shut it down then we should do that. Vickie asked if he is suggesting that we close it. He said not necessarily, but we need to talk about moving forward. Gerard stated that something has to be done to cover it. He suggested throwing a pallet over it until it can be figured out. Sheldon stated that we have had several issues out there and maybe it should be closed for now. Chris mentioned that we should tell the neighbor if they see anything in the future, to call the Sheriff’s Office. Kevin said that he would take care of closing Big Bend and taking any signs down and putting up “no trespassing” signs.

Brent asked if anyone had any comments. Kathi stated that she knows that they do the liability waiver in Sturgeon Lake yearly.

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

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Diane Nelson