**Willow River City Council Meeting**

May 4, 2020

Approved June 1, 2020

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the Willow River City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, May 4, 2020 via Webex and at Willow River City Hall.

**Council Present:** Brent Switzer, Kevin McGreanor, Vickie Whitehouse, Sheldon Johnson and Chris Ketchmark were present at City Hall.

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

**Others Present via Webex:** John Mikrot, Art and Shelly Underhill.

**Approval of the Agenda:** Vickie makes a motion to approve the consent agenda. Kevin 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**- the Fire Department has had 4 fire calls, 28 EMS and 0 other calls for a total of 32 for this year. They are getting things switched over for grass fires. They have applied for the 2020 - 2021 DNR grant that is a 50/50 matching. The current 50/50 grant that we received from the DNR is being finalized with the help of Diane. We are still looking at a grant with Sandstone for radios with the Mutual Aid Association to upgrade radios. The department is not doing much for public relations due to COVID-19. They have also put recruitment on hold until that is under control. The WRFD received a donation from Harold and Carol Blatz. That is much appreciated. Gerard also thanked everyone who has donated to everyone for pitching in with supplies and pizza. There have been numerous and it is appreciated. 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 are practicing social distancing and taking temperatures as well as sanitizing after each call. Vickie asked if they had what they needed. Gerard said at this time they were pretty good. The Department wanted to thank everyone and the community for their support. Hydrant locks and bollards are on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Water and Sewer, John Mikrot –** The water tower is up to height for the summer. Hydrants are currently being flushed this week. John patched the roads but did not do Walters Road. Vickie asked John about the rocks at the sewer pond that need to be cleaned up for mowing. John thought that it was on the punch list for the construction of the new ponds. Vickie will check with Kevin from MSA. Vickie also asked how many times a month it was mowed in the past. John really didn’t know because you don’t want it to get too long because then it is hard to mow. Vickie asked if he thought twice a month would work. He thought that that would probably be enough. Sheldon clarified the patching on Walters Road. John patched it last year, so this year would be Kettle River Townships responsibility according to the agreement. Sheldon said that he would call Dave about it. John thought that Dave was not on the board any longer. Diane said that she would help Sheldon find the board members so he can contact someone.

**City Clerk, Diane Nelson** – We received the final payment from Homeland Security for the 2016 flood. The amount was $256,968.87. I am working to finish up the grant. We have about $17,000 left to be reimbursed for that. The tires on Willow Street were not being used by MN Power. Kevin was able to touch base with them and they didn’t have them there to use. John took them and the refrigerator to the dump for us. The election notice is posted. There are positions at the county level that are filing this month. The ones for our area are Commissioner and Sewer and Water conservation district. There will be election judge training in June and July. All of our judges would need to go. If we go to mail ballots, there would be less judges needing to go.

**Water and Sewer Billing, Katie Bennett –** Diane also gave the Council Kathi’s report. There were 150 bills sent out. 29 were email and 121 were mailed. The total was $11,751.83. If we would have been charging late fees there would have been $253.58 in late fees. Diane mentioned that the ones listed on the late fee list are mainly the normal ones who we assess each year and not many have been due to COVID-19.

Zoning, Sheldon - One gazebo permit has been written. Diane asked about a permit that we just received payment for and that was on a deck that is being put up.

**Old Business**

1. Security system – Sheldon clarified to it as cameras and not a security system. He was also wondering about purchasing a camera system to save money and see if Sam would install it. Kevin stated that it can be a weather issue with how good the cameras are. Sheldon asked if he had looked into it and he said that he did quite a bit of research. Diane stated that Cyberts would not install a system that they didn’t recommend and would stand behind. Vickie asked about the warranty. The warranty on the cameras is five years. He did stop and check our electric in the office and it should work. Sheldon stated that he knows people in town who have security systems and it is much cheaper than this. Those aren’t cameras necessarily but security. Gerard asked where the data is stored. If it is the cloud or on a drive that they can steal. Chris makes a motion to go ahead with purchasing and installing the security cameras. Kevin seconded.

Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – no

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried.

1. MN Power agreement – have not heard.
2. Hydrant locks – nothing new
3. Stop sign – Brent said that he heard that it is up. Kevin said that it was.
4. Quit claim deed with DNR – Last month Sheldon stated he wanted more time to review it. Vickie makes a motion to approve the agreement with the DNR. Kevin seconded.

Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor.

1. Liquor Ordinance – This was presented last month and some more time was needed to review it. Sheldon asked why it needed to be amended? Was it just changing the verbiage of beer and alcohol? Brent responded that the Sheriff recommended that we change it so it is stated more clearly for them to enforce. Sheldon stated that it has been that way for years and asked if that was the only reason it is being updated. Brent stated that we didn’t have issues until now. Chris mentioned that a lot of times, we don’t know that something needs to be changed until there is an issue with it. That is a common problem and we need to deal with it. Chris makes a motion to approve the amended liquor ordinance. Kevin seconded.

Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor.

Diane reiterated that we still need to follow guidelines to finalize the amendment such as publishing it, etc…

1. Sewer at Big Bend – Vickie stated that we cannot do anything with it other than cover it because we signed an agreement with FEMA when it was a buyout. It has been covered. Kevin and Vickie locked it and put up a “No Trespassing” sign.

**New Business**  -

1. Mail Ballot- Brent asked if everyone has had a chance to read the email that Diane forwarded from Kelly Schroeder at Pine County? Vickie stated that she is all for it. Brent stated that some of the pros are that it would save the City money and the voter turnout seems to be better. Sheldon brought up that fraud is a con. Kathi said that Sturgeon Lake currently does mail ballots and they have not had issues with fraud. She says it saves a lot of time and we should have a time where voters can come in and ask questions and see how the mail ballot works. She did say that you need to educate the voters. It has saved the City of Sturgeon Lake quite a bit of money. Sheldon asked how it saves money. Kathi said that you are only paying two judges for a few hours instead of 6 from 6:30 am – 9:00 pm (3 at a time in two shifts). The City is not buying meals or paying time and mileage for picking up rosters and ballots and doing a Public Accuracy Test. Diane stated that we can currently get by with less judges because we have a combined polling place. Vickie asked if we were under agreement of any kind with Rutledge and Bremen. She thought that we paid something for it. Diane stated that we do pay each election for programming and costs by the Auditors office. Vickie thought there was something more. Kathi said that was before she was working here. The cost that we are being refunded for the last election (Presidential Primary) was over $1200. Diane said that she would contact Kelly at the Auditors office regarding any agreements we may have. Vickie makes a motion to go to mail ballots. Sheldon asked Kathi if she thought that it would save the City money if we go to this. She said yes. Sheldon seconded.

Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor. Sheldon asked if voters can still go to Rutledge and vote. Diane said “no” that they could go to the courthouse in Pine City and vote if needed. Rutledge and Bremen township will still be voting in Rutledge.

1. Lawn mowing bids – Vickie stated that we no longer need to have the sewer ponds mowed weekly. Once or twice a month should be sufficient. Sheldon thought once per month would be fine. There was discussion regarding how to notify Eatons on when it should be mowed if it needs it more than once per month. It was decided that John would let Diane know if it needs to be mowed more than once a month and she will email Eatons. It was also decided that the ramps and lift stations should only be mowed twice per month or as needed. Vickie also suggested that they stop mowing by September 15th. Vickie compared their bid to the one from the previous year. Diane will also let them know to hold off on the rocks until we check with MSA. The building was also brought up that it still needs to be fixed that they hit last year. Vickie makes a motion to have Eatons Lawncare mow for us for this upcoming season. Chris seconded.

Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor.

1. Graduation – Vickie said that the high school principal stopped in and they are going to have a small parade around town on May 22nd to honor our graduates. They asked to use the city streets. They will be starting around 8 pm. They are hoping that residents will come out and support them. Vickie said that she would like to make a banner. Kevin makes a motion to allow the school to use the city streets on Friday, May 22nd from 5-9 pm to honor the graduates. Vickie seconded.

Roll call vote:

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Motion carried with all in favor.

Diane updated the Council that there was an issue with garbage being dumped at the City Park. The Sheriff’s Office was contacted and they checked the garbage and was able to track it back to someone. They were ticketed for illegal dumping. Both Sheldon and Vickie stated that they have done some picking up of trash in town as well.

Brent asked if any of the people attending by webex had any comments or questions. None

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

Vickie Whitehouse – yes

Sheldon Johnson – yes

Chris Ketchmark – yes

Kevin McGreanor – yes

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Diane Nelson