**Willow River City Council Meeting**

July 6, 2021

Approved August 2nd, 2021

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the Willow River City Council held its regular meeting on Tuesday, July 6th, 2021 at Willow River City Hall.

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

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

**Others Present:** Gerard Bennett, John Mikrot, Rosie Mielke, Gary Novak, Don Otwell, Alley McGreanor, Arnold Niemela, Curt Rossow,Dave Prachar, Tom Jensen and Alanea White.

**Approval of the Agenda:** Vickie makes a motion to approve the consent agenda. Kevin seconded. Motion carried with all in favor.

**Willow River Fire Department, Gerard Bennett**- Runs to date; Fire- 23, EMS-39, and other-0 for a total of 62 calls. The DNR is looking for a replacement for truck #3. Gerard said that the Fire Department has discussed hydrant locks and how to deal with them. The I-gel grant is in process. Rick Borchardt is looking into PPE grants. He went to the Lions for a donation. They have applied for a DNR 50/50 grant for $9600 to go towards the PPE. The fire department participated at the Finlayson parade and are helping with the music and memories program and are planning on going to the Rutabaga festival in Askov. There are two recruits in the works. EMT and EMR refreshers will be here at the hall in August. The marquee sign has a spot on Co. Road 43 on the north bay of the hall at the intersection on the building. Sheldon makes a motion to approve the marquee sign and location. Kevin seconded. Motion carried with all in favor. Gerard is asking the city to provide the electricity for it and to allow the office staff to do the programming of it. Gerard also brought to the council the need for air conditioning. He said that the Relief Association will pay ½ of the cost up to $5000 if the city will pay the remaining. The fire department has meetings, training and need to cool down after calls and that air conditioning is really needed. He asked for an answer tonight so that they can get going on it. He also asked that approval be made so that Dave Kliniski, Diane and Gerard Bennett have the authority to give approval and act on the project. Kevin made a motion to approve air conditioning up to $5000 from the city and that Dave, Diane and Gerard can make the decision. Sheldon seconded. Motion carried with all in favor. Gerard thanked the council.

**Water and Sewer, John Mikrot –** John said that at the Squirrel Cage motel the meter wire had been cut. He felt that it had been tampered with. Sheldon asked if we can estimate the usage from the month before. Kathi said that there was no usage from May and June. She took the usage from the previous May and June for 6 years and billed the average usage from those months. The council felt that that was fair. The council looked at the ordinance. There is a fee in our fee schedule that is $200 for meter replacement or intentional damage. Chris makes a motion to charge the Squirrel Cage $200 for the tampering. Kevin seconded. Motion carried with all in favor. Diane brought up Vessco. John said that he would pay the initial bill but he feels that it is their negligence for the above and beyond charges. He is waiting for Vessco to call him back to discuss it.

**City Clerk, Diane Nelson** – LMC membership dues increased by 4% this year. Diane brought up the split rail fence. It had been approved and wanted to remind the Council about it. Diane wanted direction with the additional Vessco invoices since John has mentioned that it was their error. I asked what to do in our employee handbook regarding Juneteenth. I informed the Council that I was not going to helping with National Night out. Lastly, Diane reminded the Council about the Board of Equalization training and that we needed two Councilmembers to go through it. The IF Initiative asked for a donation from the city. They give local grants. The Council decided not to donate.

**Water and Sewer Billing, Katie Bennett** – Kathi sent out 150 bills; 27 email bills for a total of $17399.04. Late fees totaled $411.92. If we were doing shut offs there would have been 5. Kathi has been checking to see when we can start doing shut offs again. Kathi printed out information for rental utilities help and sent that out to all of the rental owners so that they can get them to their renters. Bradd Mlaskoch came and got water from the hydrant without notifying us first.

**Zoning, Sheldon**- One permit for a garage on Kandiyohi and two homes on Wyatt’s Cove.

**Dam Update, Vickie-** DNR still wants people to stay out. Maybe in September we can get the flag pole up. Sheldon suggested cameras for up there. He said that he had a couple people approach him and would help monitor it. The fence posts helped keep people out really well.

**Old Business**

1. MN Power agreement – nothing new
2. Hydrant locks – Kevin said that Gerard strongly recommends that we put hydrant locks on. The contractors need to go through the correct procedures when they get water. Kevin said that it will be quite expensive to fix a hydrant if it isn’t used properly. The Fire Department is prepared to order bolt cutters if they need to get into one and don’t have a key. Diane will look at updated pricing. Kevin will talk to John and Gerard as well.
3. Annexation – Diane talked to Chelsie and the thought was if the annexation is approved that it would go under a temporary zoning of “O” until we determine what it would be zoned at. We would then need to re-establish our planning commission to determine the zoning for this property. The other thing would be to amend our zoning ordinance to allow for an interim use permit because this looks like it would be the best way to oversee the use of that property. We need to look into what we want the conditions to be with the “O” while the planning commission meets and gives a recommendation to the city. The council discussed the planning committee. Curt Rossow asked some questions. Kevin asked if the council still wanted to annex the property in since he is currently sitting in blatant violation with the County and Kettle River Township. Don Otwell explained that Tom is currently not in compliance with the township since he did not get a permit for a campground. Tom stated that he is in compliance with the State of MN. Gary Novak stated his opinion against the annexation. Kevin stated that he was against annexing in someone who knowingly is operating without legal permitting. He felt that Tom didn’t go about it the right way. He should have stopped the renting of campsites when the township notified him to do so. Will he follow the City’s ordinances? Kevin suggested approving the one property but not the campground. Chris said that this process has taken a lot longer than anticipated. Sheldon agreed. Brent called for a vote. Sheldon seconded. Roll call vote:

Kevin- No

Vickie- Abstain

Chris – yes

Sheldon – yes

We will start with forming a Planning Commission. Brent said he is willing to be on it. The Council discussed some people to approach to be on it. The Ordinance will have to go on to be approved by the county and state. Gary Novak asked some questions about the process.

1. Liquor Ordinance – Brent asked the council if they had a change to look through it. Diane said she spent a lot of time going through the old verses the new and the things that Sheldon had highlighted. It was reiterated that we are revoking all of our liquor ordinances and going with this new ordinance. Section 4: consumption in public places should be removed. Section 5: silent auction should stay. Section 10: Council discretion to grant or deny a license – is currently in our ordinance #22. Section 12: description of premises – remove the part where it states it may not include any parking lot or sidewalk. Section 18: part A, stating that training must occur should be removed.
2. Garage used as a residence- They did hook up to water and sewer and are adding on.
3. National Night Out- August 3rd. Vickie said that she had contacted a few places.
4. Road agreement with Kettle River Township- Chelsie made some changes. Don Otwell said that he is good with the changes and will bring it to the township. Kevin makes a motion to approve the agreement. Chris seconded. Motion carried with all in favor.

**New Business**

1. ARPA funds – American Rescue Plan Act are funds to help with economic impact due to COVID-19. They are suggesting that we apply for the funds. We are looking at a ballpark figure of $40,000. If we apply and don’t use it, then it would be returned. We would have until the end of 2024 to plan what to do with it and it needs to be used by the end of 2026. Diane asked the council if they wanted me to apply. There will be more eligible expenses known as time goes on. Yes, the council said to apply.

Motion made by Chris to adjourn the meeting. Vickie seconded. Motion carried with all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Diane Nelson