**Willow River City Council Meeting**

September 7, 2021

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the Willow River City Council held its regular meeting on Tuesday, September 7th, 2021 at Willow River City Hall.

The meeting opened with the Public Hearing on amending the liquor ordinance. There was no one in attendance with any comments. Brent made a motion to approve the amended liquor ordinance. Kevin seconded. Motion carried with all in favor.

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

**Staff Present:** Diane Nelson

**Others Present:** Gerard Bennett, John Mikrot, Dave Prachar, and Alanea White.

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

**Dave Prachar, Commercial Club –** The Commercial Club would like to get involved with the flags and possible banners but are wondering if the Council has a plan for them. They would be willing to purchase them and organize a plan but the City would need to take responsibility for putting them up and taking them down. Vickie mentioned someone had mentioned burying the power along 61. Dave said that they would come up with a plan. Sheldon asked if they would still put flags up? It was determined that the original plan was to go every other: flag, banner, flag, etc… Dave also asked if the city would like seasonal flags? He said he would put something together and bring it back to the Council.

**Planning Commission, Dave Prachar -**  Dave updated the Council regarding their first meeting. One member will likely not be on it. Melissa Johnson will take that spot. Sheldon asked who was on the commission. It is Brent (vice chair), Dave (chair), Melissa Johnson (secretary), Harold Blatz, Leon and Pat Herzog, Alley McGreanor, Art Underhill. The terms are: 1 year, Harold and Pat; 2 year, Dave, Melissa and Leon; 3 year, Brent, Alley and Art. Vickie makes a motion to approve Melissa Johnson to the commission as well as the term lengths. Kevin seconded. Motion carried with all in favor. Vickie mentioned that Judy Kliniski may be interested.

**Willow River Fire Department, Gerard Bennett**- Runs to date: Fire – 24, EMS – 58, other – 0 for a total of 82 calls so far this year. They are working on the new truck that will be the replacement for truck #3. Trucks #1 and #2 had their pump tests. # 1 needs a little work (nothing major) and #2 passed. Gerard said that overall, equipment is in good shape. They are waiting on the last estimate to come in on the AC. DNR 50/50 grant was denied, but they still have the money from the Lions for PPE. They have applied for a Pine County Mutual Aid grant for radios. They were at the Askov Rutabaga Days parade. The department also has the Girl Scouts visit the hall to help them with their first aid badge. They helped at National Night Out and will be helping at the park this coming Saturday. Diane let Gerard know that Finlayson is having their postponed St Urho’s Day parade on the 18th. They have received a donation of 6 bolt cutters from an anonymous donor. EMR/EMT refresher has been completed.

The marquee sign still needs a good location. Let Gerard know if you have any thoughts.

Rick Borchardt gave a Fire Relief Association retirement contribution update. The fund is doing good. 2% of homeowner’s insurance premiums go to this fund through the state. They have that invested with the state board of investments and they do not charge to invest through them. The fire department has requirements to be vested in the retirement. To be considered an “active” member, you need to attend at least one meeting per month and go to 20% of the calls. In the last 2 ½ years, they have earned over $100,000.00 in those investments which makes them overfunded. They would like to increase the benefit amount. The current amount is $950/year. Rick handed out financial projections and went through them with the Council. They are proposing and increase to $1800. Even with that increase, there would be a surplus of $121,065.000. To be partially vested at 60% you need 10 years of service. At 20 years, then you are fully vested. Sheldon makes a motion to approve the increase to $1800. Kevin seconded. Motion carried with all in favor.

**Water and Sewer, John Mikrot –** Last month John and the Council discussed Gander Drive and the sewer there. John spoke to Tom and he gave John a map of the sewer there and Tom thought that it was turned over to the city at the same time as Wyatt’s Cove. They talked about how to charge Tom’s new duplex. Sheldon thought that we should meter it. The council discussed the sewer line on Gander. John started jetting. When he comes through on 43, he gets a lot of sand coming in. He will clean it out and then it will get sandy again. He is suggesting that we get it televised so that we can see why. He called a couple of places to see how much it would cost and is thinking it would be around $3000-$3700. Sheri Lemke had issues again with air flow through the ducts, so she had some issues when John was jetting. It needs to be televised soon after it is cleaned out so that they can get a good look. Brent asked John to shop around. Kevin suggested that we let John get a couple of estimates and go with the cheapest one. He thought we should trust him to get the best price and get it done this fall. Sheldon and Vickie wanted him to get pricing and come back to the Council. Kevin made a motion to give John the go ahead to get it televised at his lowest bid. No one seconded. John did some road repairs. He also got that steel band around the lift station and used the old media to fill in the band. John and Beckie took a water sample down to the conference and Willow River won the best tasting water in MN award. They will be coming to a future Cit Council meeting to present the award. The Squirrel Cage motel reading went backwards when Beckie read them last month. John went to check out why and his seal was cut and the meter was pulled and turned around. It was definitely tampered with. Sheldon asked if we fined them last time? Yes, we did. John said that he is going to check it again. Vickie suggested shutting the water off to the motel. Sheldon said that he had people coming up to him complaining about sand in the water. John said that it could be the water heater. Sheldon also thought there would be people from other areas of town that would complain as well. There is a screen in the meter that will plug up if there is sand in the line going into the house. There is also another homeowner that has contacted John that has gone through a couple of hot water heaters in only a few years. John asked at the conference he attended and they thought if there is a water softener that salt (or too much salt could make it caustic) could be contributing to that and/or if they set the temperature is kept too high. Sheldon wanted to talk about Walter’s Road while John was still there. Kevin attended the township meeting last month that Don Otwell requested someone to be at. At that meeting road repairs were discussed and getting bids to redo the road. Sheldon said that he doesn’t see a need other than patching the road and that the majority of work needs to be done on the Kettle River township side. John and Sheldon discussed what should be patched.

**City Clerk, Diane Nelson** – I am working on budget verses actual for the first ½ of the year. Next month will be an early meeting for reviews.

**Water and Sewer Billing, Katie Bennett** – Kathi has three people set up in payment arrangements currently. There was one shut and they have paid. Billing last month totaled $16,340.66. Late fees were $361.92. On Jackie Franko’s residence, do we want to estimate her usage like we do some others that are on just sewer? The council thought to meter. Diane asked if we should just meter them all? Sheldon thought we should meter them all. Yes, meter them all. Kathi had researched drought notifications and we didn’t discuss that because of the recent rainfall. She also had the meter tampering at the Squirrel Cage motel on her items.

**Zoning, Sheldon**- nothing new.

**Dam Update, Vickie-** The new flag at the park at the rock arch rapids will be going up this Saturday, September 11th. The Legion will be on hand for the ceremony. Anyone available should be at the park at 10 am to help. They are also going to try to get a portion of the fence up. The Council discussed trespassing up there.

**Old Business**

1. Hydrant locks – Kevin had estimates for the hydrant locks. Vickie makes a motion to buy the 35 hydrant locks. Chris seconded. Motion carried with all in favor.
2. Liquor Ordinance – see above
3. Annexation – nothing
4. Walter’s Road – see above
5. ARPA funds – keep it in mind

**New Business**

1. Budget meeting – to set the levy. Proposed levy is due by September 30th. Monday, September 20th at 4:30 pm.
2. Resolution for DNR/NPR – This is the same thing that is being finalized. Motion made by Chris to approve the resolution. Vickie seconded. Motion carried with all in favor.

Motion made by Vickie to adjourn the meeting. Chris seconded. Motion carried with all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Diane Nelson