

Public Hearing and Regular City Council Meeting
Willow River City Hall
November 1, 2021 at 7 pm

Public Hearing

Council Members Present: Mayor Brent Switzer, Vickie Whitehouse, Sheldon Johnson, and Chris Ketchmark.

Others Present: New City Clerk Tiffany Parr, Utility Billing Clerk Kathleen Bennett, Water and Sewer Operator John Mikrot, Fire Chief Gerard Bennett, Shaine Parr, David Prachar, Harold Blatz, Art Underhill, Rosie Mielke, and Alanea White from the Star Gazette.

Call to order: Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the public hearing was called to order at 7:05 pm by Mayor Switzer with the pledge of allegiance.

Public Hearing: The council was presented the names and amounts for certification to taxes of the delinquent fees for water and sewer utility accounts. No members of the public present had any comment or requests of the council. The council looked over the list of past due amounts on the certification list.

[C. Ketchmark made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2021-10 Certifying Unpaid Charges for Delinquent Utility Bills, seconded by V. Whitehouse. Motion carried with all members present voting in favor. One council seat was vacant.](#)

Adjournment of Public Hearing: The public hearing was adjourned at 7:10 pm with the following motion:

[C. Ketchmark made a motion to adjourn the public hearing, seconded by V. Whitehouse. Motion carried with all members present voting in favor. One council seat was vacant.](#)

Regular City Council Meeting

Call to Order: Mayor Switzer called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at 7:11 pm.

Consent Agenda: The consent agenda which includes the minutes of the October 4, 2021 regular city council meeting, the closed meeting for the employee review for Kathleen Bennett, the minutes for the Special Meeting from November 1, 2021 for appointing a new city clerk, the disbursements and financial reports, and accounts payable was submitted for approval. The Mayor asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

[V. Whitehouse made a motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by C. Ketchmark. Motion carried with all members present voting in favor. One council seat was vacant.](#)

Fire Chief, Gerard Bennett: Chief Bennett reported the runs to date as 27 fire calls and 75 EMS calls this year. For a total of 112 runs this year. He also reported on the new truck #3, status of the hydrant locks and bullyards, HVAC for city hall is waiting on the last bid, status of the Pine County used radios,

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and the fire equipment winterization is completed. Pine County mutual aid radio grant is waiting on a grant writer, public relations at the Willow River School ECFE, handing out candy at Halloween, the Gobble Wobble on Thanksgiving day at the hall, and the WRFD and EMS gun raffle will be held at the Squirrel Cage Bar and Grill on Saturday, November 20, 2021. The Willow River kindergarten class is also interested in coming to the fire hall. Bennett also reported that there is currently one cadet in the works, the Pine County mutual aid agreement may be modified to include EMS (medical) calls. The department would like to start a WRFD Auxiliary that is all volunteer. The fire relief association will cover any expenses, there could be possible requirements of first aid and CPR training. The council discussed whether volunteers are covered under the city insurance. Chief Bennett asked if they could have the blessing of the city council to continue researching the WRFD Auxiliary. The council discussed insurance coverage and were in favor of the auxiliary idea.

[V. Whitehouse made a motion to approve the WRFD research starting an auxiliary, seconded by C. Ketchmark. Motion carried with all members present voting in favor. One council seat was vacant.](#)

Planning Commission Update: Chair Dave Prachar reported that he will be bringing a report to the council next month no later than December or January. He stated that things are moving along well. One request is that the city update the zoning map, as the current one is from 1968. He contacted Pine County and the planning committee is working on a new zoning map. They are needing the council's approval to update the city zoning map. Then they may move forward with zoning issues. The city council had a discussion about LandShark and Beacon. V. Whitehouse will look into whether we have LandShark.

[S. Johnson made a motion to authorize the planning commission to work on updating the city zoning map, seconded by V. Whitehouse. Motion carried with all members present voting in favor. One council seat was vacant.](#)

John Mikrot, Water and Sewer Operator: J. Mikrot reported that the hydrants were flushed, the park bathroom has been shut off, they will be putting up the Christmas lights the day after Thanksgiving and are doing the bulb replacement now. The council had a discussion on whether Minnesota Power would be able to put up the Christmas lights for the city. Vickie will research this topic and report back to the council. John submitted pictures of the sewer pipe MRWA (Minnesota Rural Water Association) televised on Church Street. The pipe was crushed and punched through by someone that directional bored in that area within the last three years. John said he could look up the gopher one tickets. John thought that it was when the water line to Brad Mlaskoch Shop was put in. John thought that any line that is put in needs a tracer wire put in with it. Also, J. Mikrot spoke about the water lines legally needing to be ten feet on the side and 18 inches. It looks like Brad Mlaskoch (off Willow Street) water line is at eight feet and will probably be freezing up regularly. John said that Ronnie "Gus" Roberts could repair it. He usually does work for the city on sewer and water lines. The area to be fixed is close to Jerry Kachmarzinski's driveway. John suggested that since there is an extra 600 feet of pipe on the Mlaskoch service, that it would be a good idea to put a curb stop (shut off) about ten feet off the main, so that it can be shut off in the future without shutting off the whole town. The council asked John about when they hooked up. The council asked J. Mikrot to look at the Gopher One tickets to find out when this

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happened. The council discussed the direction that should be taken for hooking up the water line and wanted J. Mikrot to get in touch with them. Mikrot gave T. Jensen a meter loop for the duplex on Gander. The council asked J. Mikrot about the meters for people on Wyatt's Cove and T. Jensen duplex. They all need meters and loops for their sewer usage. K. Bennett will ask Julie Mlaskoch if she would like her sewer usage metered like all the others on Wyatt's Cove.

Clerk Report: K. Bennett gave the Clerk report since T. Parr was just hired. The city received a check from Northview Bank to the City of Willow River for a gun raffle donation. This check should have been written to the Fire Relief Association. K. Bennett asked if the city could cut a check to the Fire Relief Association for that amount? The council agreed that it would be okay. A membership form from MRWA came in the mail past due. Is that something we want to pay? The council decided that they want to remain a member of MRWA and want the clerk to call and find out if the membership was already paid online. The Troth Law bill was discussed at the last meeting. The council had wanted a better breakdown on the bill. Mike Bjerke has been emailed about this, but he has not gotten back to us yet. Pine County sent us a notification of when the Board of Equalization Meeting is scheduled for on April 21, 2021 at 6pm at city hall. They just need a confirmation email. The council had a short discussion on everyone making sure they are trained for this meeting in case one of them can't be there. Terry Lovegren sent information about broadband in the meeting packet.

Kathleen Bennett, Utility Billing Clerk: K. Bennett gave a report on the water and sewer billing. She will be sending out the billing on the fifth of November and will report on that at the next meeting. There is \$6,641.02 in assessments that are being sent down for certification. There have been lots of turnover of houses on the system. Lakes and Pines had contacted her about some federal funding that can be used to keep people from being shut off on their utilities. The city would have to approve Lakes and Pines to do this. Currently only two residents are chronically on the shut off list. The council asked if this would be fair to the people in the city that pay their bills, since this is taxpayer money and most of our residents pay their bills every month. The council would like more information on this topic. This is tabled until the next meeting. K. Bennett had questions for J. Mikrot about whether Josh Day (on Wyatt's Cove) and Tom Jensen Duplex (on Gander Drive) are hooked up yet. He said they are not hooked up yet, but he is working with them on getting the meters and loops.

Sheldon Johnson, Zoning: S. Johnson had nothing new to report.

V. Whitehouse, Dam Update: V. Whitehouse reported that she has to get in touch with Minnesota Power to get working on the new service for the flagpole and possibly a light over to the pavilion on Friday. She also stated that the state is not doing anything more at the rock arch rapids area until the spring.

Old Business

Vacant Council Seat: A letter of interest was received from Shaine Parr for the vacant city council seat. Art Underhill expressed an interest verbally in being on the city council. Mr. Parr stated that he would

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like to concede to Mr. Underhill due to his experience being a city council member previously. The council had a short discussion and thanked Mr. Parr for his letter of interest.

[S. Johnson made a motion to approve Art Underhill filling the vacant city council seat, seconded by V. Whitehouse. Motion carried with B. Switzer, V. Whitehouse, S. Johnson voted in favor. C. Ketchmark voted against.](#)

The oath of office was given to Mr. Underhill and he signed it.

Hydrant Locks Update: Gerard gave this in his report.

Annexation - Costs Update: Nothing new discussed.

ARPA Funds: Nothing new discussed.

Zoning Ordinance Amendment - Update: The planning commission will be making a recommendation at the next city council meeting.

New Business

2022 Elections - Keep Mail Balloting or Designating another Polling Place: The council had a short discussion and decided to keep doing the mail-in ballots at Pine County to save money. No one in town has complained about it and it saved about \$3,000 in costs.

[V. Whitehouse made a motion to approve Resolution No. 2021-11, A Resolution to Designate the Polling Place for the City of Willow River for the 2022 Election Year, seconded by C. Ketchmark. Motion carried with a roll call vote with all members present voting in favor.](#)

City Park Bathroom: John closed it down for the winter. There was a complaint about it sent to the council. Kevin McGreanor was the Park liaison. A new Park officer will be appointed at the January organizational meeting.

Complaints: The council appreciated the new complaint forms. The council discussed the complaints. They wanted to look closer at the blight ordinance. They need a copy of the blight ordinance for the next meeting to discuss blight issues in the city. J. C. Melrose picked up the garbage dump on Walters Rd. The clerk will send a thank you note to him for helping with that. The dog complaints are from two different dogs which included a bite to a resident. The council wanted letters sent to the residents about the dog complaints. One of them has been sent a letter previously. The council wants to look into the next step for that one. There was also a complaint about the street lights being too concentrated and not spread out enough. That is something that Minnesota Power is in charge of. There was also a complaint about a flag being hung on private property. It was looked into through the League of Minnesota Cities

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attorney, and it is a matter of free speech. The American flag has to hang above any other flag. Which it does.

Announcements

Next Regular City Council Meeting - December 6, 2021 at 7 pm.

WRFD Fall Gun Raffle - November 20, 2021.

Gobble Wobble - Thanksgiving Day at 9 am at City Hall.

V. Whitehouse brought up that all council members have their timesheets in to the Clerk in December.

Adjournment

[V. Whitehouse made a motion to adjourn, seconded by S. Johnson. Motion carried with all members present voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 pm.](#)

Kathleen Bennett, Utility Billing Clerk

Brent Switzer, Mayor