

## **Empire City Council Meeting Minutes June 13, 2023**

The meeting of the Empire City Council was called to order by Mayor Trent Larson at 7:00 PM.

**Present were:** Mayor Trent Larson; Council Members Eric Hanson, Tom Kaldunski, Danny Rubio, Marla Vagts; Charles Seipel-Teng; Jerod Waltman; Brian Hilgardner; and Jenni Faulkner.

**Agenda:** Tom Kaldunski made a motion to approve the agenda. Marla Vagts seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

**Minutes:** Tom Kaldunski made a motion to approve the minutes of the City Council Meeting of May 23, 2023; Planning Commission Meeting of June 6, 2023; Park & Rec. Meeting of June 12, 2023. Marla Vagts seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

**Treasurer Report:** The treasurer's report showed a General Fund Account balance of \$48,320.22 plus investments and an Escrow Account balance of \$15,059.65 plus investments. The report included the Cash Balance Report as of 6/13/2023.

\$50,000 was transferred from General Savings to General Checking on 6/13/2023.

Eric Hanson made a motion to approve the financial report. Marla Vagts seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

**Bills to be Paid:** A motion by Eric Hanson to pay the attached list of bills in the amount of \$131,520.08. Tom Kaldunski seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

**Visitors:**  
None.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Maintenance / Sewer and Water / Road and Bridges**

Jerod Waltman reported that tower cleaning is taking place today. The maintenance crew will work on the 190th Street roundabout tomorrow and grading and dust control on the gravel roads will start next week.

Nicholas Large, a resident on Chippendale Frontage Road, requested information about the status of the road and if there are plans to pave the road. It was reported that there are currently no plans to pave the road. The road was exceptionally bad this spring due to the unusual weather over the winter. Brian Hilgardner noted that depending on the plans that MN DOT has for Highway 3, it may not make sense to pave the road as grading and right of way might change if MN DOT widens Highway 3. If the road was paved, the property owners along the road would be assessed for some of the costs to do so.

The City Council reviewed information on a proposed mower trade-in through Midwest Machinery. The current mower, a 2019 model, is having issues with the weight of the mower in relation to the tires. Because of this issue, the dealer is providing good value on a trade-in.

To make room in the budget, the City could put on hold the tool cat trade-in until next year and rehabilitate the existing city hall and town hall park signs instead of purchasing new signs. This would leave a \$2,700 budget variance. It was recommended that the mower be included in the city's capital improvement plan for trade-in every five years. Tom Kaldunski made a motion to approve the John Deere lawn mower trade-in with a budget variance of up to \$5,000. Marla Vagts seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

It was reported that the City had issues over Memorial Day weekend with a public works building rental that required extensive cleanup and lost keys. The City Council discussed the option of permitting the public works building to be rented by city residents only. The Council recommended that the Planning Commission review the fee schedule to see if additional damage deposits should be required for the rental of the facility.

It was reported that large amounts of water are currently being used throughout the city due to lawn watering in these dry conditions. The Council reviewed information on what other cities in the area charge for water restriction violations. Jerod Waltman reported that several cities are getting tougher on violations as the aquifer is not being replenished due to high water use in the area. It is a statewide issue. The Council recommended that the Planning Commission review the water citation fees.

**Deputy Sheriff:**

No report.

**Park & Recreation:**

Eric Hanson and Danny Rubio reported that there is a resident looking to build on the Empire Celebration by holding events at Stelzel Fields as a fundraiser. There were concerns about the timing of the lights at the ballfields. The parking lot lights should be programmed to turn off at 11:00 PM and the ballfield lights should be turned off at the current recommended time of 10:30 PM. There was a request to install lights at the Town Hall Park tennis courts. Staff should look at getting an estimate for the installation of the lights.

**Engineering:**

Brian Hilgardner reported that he is still waiting on a quote from Roadbotics for the street condition assessment.

There were concerns about how to handle aging or broken booster pumps on 191st Street. Originally the pumps were required to be installed by the developer to boost water pressure as a condition of development as that area receives lower pressure from the water tower. The idea at the time was that eventually a new tower would be constructed to the north and the pumps would no longer be needed. It was Brian's recommendation that without the pumps, homes on this street would still receive the required amount of pressure, except if the lawns were being irrigated. He is recommending that because the homes receive adequate pressure, that the

homeowners should be responsible for the replacement of the booster pumps. Staff will check current water pressure in the area to ensure that pressure is adequate and bring the results back to the Council for discussion.

**Planning:**

Jenni Faulkner reported that Kwik Trip approached the Planning Commission as they are getting ready to submit permit applications. The Planning Commission will be receiving requests from Holcim Inc. and Nitti Sanitation for zoning ordinance amendments. There is a public hearing on a zoning ordinance amendment at the June 20th Planning Commission Meeting.

The Council reviewed a comprehensive plan amendment from the City of Lakeville for the Tradition Development Corp. Property. Tom Kaldunski made a motion to recommend “no comment” on the City of Lakeville comprehensive plan amendment. Danny Rubio seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

It was reported that the Planning Commission is recommending that the City consider adopting franchise fees for street reconstruction revenue in lieu of the development of a special assessment policy. Franchise fees would apply to electric and natural gas customers. The City would need to adopt an ordinance to impose the fees and then enter into a franchise agreement with the utility companies. The Council asked if off peak meters could be exempt from the fees.

The City Council reviewed the draft winter parking ordinance. The ordinance would require that no street parking be permitted until the streets are plowed from curb to curb for snowfalls more than three inches. There would not be exceptions for residents that cannot fit vehicles into driveways. There was discussion on whether the winter parking signs should be updated. Staff will check to see if the signs can be removed and will bring back a final draft of the ordinance for the Council to consider.

**Old Business:**

None.

**New Business:**

James Nikolaisen, resident at 3702 Upper 204th Street, reviewed recent photos of the cleanup of the property. Most of the property has been cleaned, but there are still areas he is working on. The Council directed Seipel-Teng to certify prior to the next Council meeting any nuisances that remain on the property. Any remaining nuisances will be abated by the City with costs of abatement assessed to the property. Seipel-Teng should meet with the property owner every six months after the property is found in compliance.

The Council reviewed the proposed updates to the City’s website. The updates should be ready to go live later this summer. The Council recommended that staff work to start an official City Facebook page that will be used strictly for communication purposes.

It was reported that Juneteenth is now an official State Holiday and City Hall will be closed on Monday, June 19th.

**FYI:**

The Council reviewed updated population estimates from the Metropolitan Council and communication from Dakota County on an upcoming open house for discussion on Dakota County Sheriff's patrol areas.

The City Council Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

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Trent Larson, Mayor

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Charles Seipel-Teng, Clerk – Administrator