



MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF WHITE BEAR LAKE, MINNESOTA
TUESDAY, JULY 24, 2018
7:00 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Mayor Jo Emerson called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Councilmembers Doug Biehn, Kevin Edberg, Steven Engstran, Dan Jones and Bill Walsh in attendance. Staff members present were City Manager Ellen Hiniker, Assistant City Manager Rick Juba, City Engineer Mark Burch, Assistant City Engineer Jesse Farrell, Finance Director Don Rambow, Assistant Finance Director Kerri Kindsvater, City Clerk Kara Coustry and City Attorney Andy Pratt.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Councilmember **Engstran** seconded by Councilmember **Jones**, to approve the Minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting on July 10, 2018.

Motion carried unanimously.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Councilmember **Engstran** motioned to amend the agenda by tabling 9A for more information at another work session. Councilmember **Jones** seconded the motion for purposes of discussion.

Councilmember Engstran stated that this item affects 60 employees and he only got the packet of information on Saturday. He believed the item should not be taken lightly and should be discussed further in a work session before bringing it to vote.

In response to Councilmember Jones who questioned the urgency of this item, City Manager Hiniker explained that this conversation has been going on for the past year. She said it is not urgent, however, it should be addressed sooner rather than later in order to provide the staff support that she believes is necessary.

Councilmember Walsh explained that he felt like he had enough information to act on this item tonight and did not want another work session, but he wanted to be supportive of his colleague's request for more time. To clarify, he would oppose this motion, but he would be sympathetic to tabling this action later in the agenda.

Councilmember Biehn was interested in getting the information tonight. He was okay with delaying the vote until the next meeting, but he wanted to discuss this item tonight and address this in a timely manner.

Councilmember Jones was open to tabling the item to the next meeting, but did not feel a work session was needed.

Councilmember Edberg was okay with deferring action, but thought it would be wise for Council to have a policy conversation tonight to start illuminating the issues and to allow time for additional conversation. He felt it could take 6-8 weeks to get another work session scheduled. He wanted to hear Councilmember Engstran's ideas and direction.

Councilmember Engstran noted there is already a work session scheduled for August 21st.

City Manager Hiniker stated that meeting was scheduled to talk about the budget, although some time will be dedicated to discuss the fire department and ambulance service as it relates to the 2019 budget.

In response to Councilmember Jones, Councilmember Engstran clarified the issue is related to changes with personnel rather than the budget. He stated that Chief Peterson has said a couple of times in the past that the City does not need full-time firefighters, but now he is asking to hire 12 full-time members.

City Attorney Pratt proposed moving the item to discussion to allow for policy discussion without action.

Councilmember **Walsh** amended Councilmember Engstran's motion to move item 9A to 11B under discussion, seconded by Councilmember **Biehn**. Councilmember Engstran was agreeable to the amendment.

Motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Emerson called for a vote on approving the amended agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

4. VISITORS AND PRESENTATIONS

Nothing scheduled

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Nothing scheduled

6. LAND USE

Nothing scheduled

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Nothing scheduled

8. ORDINANCES

Nothing scheduled

9. NEW BUSINESS

Moved to 11D, discussion.

10. CONSENT

- A. Resolution approving temporary liquor license for St. Mary of the Lake's Outdoor Concert. **Resolution No. 11266**
- B. Resolution approving a single event liquor extension for Carbone's Second Annual Tent Party. **Resolution No. 11267**
- C. Resolution authorizing Ladies of the Lake use of Railroad Park for a commercial sales event. **Resolution No. 11268**
- D. Resolution approving lease amendment No. 4 with AT&T for placement of communications equipment on the monopole at 3495 Century Avenue. **Resolution No. 11269**

It was moved by Councilmember **Jones** seconded by Councilmember **Biehn**, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

11. DISCUSSION

- A. Solar panels on municipal buildings

City Manager Hiniker reported staff has been meeting with local solar companies over the past few years to examine options for on-site photovoltaic (PV) generation, otherwise known as solar energy systems. These would be placed on city-owned buildings to reduce energy costs and work toward meeting renewable energy goals identified in the draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Hiniker reported that three (3) of five (5) of these energy companies offer third party financing of solar energy through a power purchase agreement (PPA) or solar lease. Under both arrangements (PPA or solar lease), there are no upfront costs to the City. The company would install a PV system and provide for its operation and maintenance over the length of the contract.

Ms. Hiniker explained that the arrangement offered by all of these third party contractors is feasible because private solar investors can take advantage of solar tax credits (roughly 30% this year), some state incentives and utility grants offered by Xcel Energy. At the end of a PPA or lease term, the building owner (City) has the option to extend the term of the lease, or purchase the system.

Ms. Hiniker explained that several communities have implemented solar contracts including the City of Shoreview who awarded a contract to Ideal Energies last month. Some cities have selected contractors through solar energy RFP while others have gone through a more informal process of inviting and interviewing reputable firms to decide which model fits best for their community.

Ms. Hiniker reported that staff was compelled by the model that was presented by Ideal Energies. They have over 250 commercial for profit and non-profit solar arrays in operation, and have recently been awarded solar contracts for several surrounding municipalities, including Richfield, Shoreview, Rogers and Elko New Market. Staff was

comfortable forgoing the RFP process now that Ideal Energies has been awarded a State of Minnesota Preferred Solar Vendor Contract.

Ms. Hiniker suggested inviting representatives from Ideal Energies to the next City Council meeting to discuss their model and provide the Council an opportunity to dig deeper.

Councilmember Jones inquired as to staff's goal for cost savings. Ms. Hiniker responded that the energy purchased through these lease agreements would be at a rate lower than that of Xcel Energy and based on the size of the system, the contractor would be able to extrapolate those cost savings. She confirmed that at this time, staff did not know exactly the percentage of savings. Councilmember Jones would like to know early in the conversation what percentage of energy savings the City would have.

Councilmember Edberg mentioned there needs to be an analytical conversation proceeding discussions on who can provide solar energy to the City. He stated it would be awkward to have a vendor making a proposal for services when the Council still needs to ascertain whether solar energy makes sense, in what ways, how much, what level of risk over what period of time, etc.

Mayor Emerson mentioned that she gets calls from citizens who ask what the City is doing about solar. She thought it would be good to get the information.

Ms. Hiniker suggested inviting a member from one of the non-profits, such as Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) to provide a presentation and generate Council conversation. Ms. Hiniker was reluctant to wait for a work session discussion as some of the energy credits may not be available for much longer. It will become increasingly more difficult for cities to get involved in solar.

In response to Councilmember Edberg, Ms. Hiniker explained that Ms. Taillon, the City's Environmental Specialist, and others have been gathering data and also have savings estimates from all five companies, which can be provided to Council.

Councilmember Walsh stated he would like to have a larger conversation about solar, although he is not sold. He stated this technology requires a 30% federal government subsidy and requires the state legislature to tell the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to mandate a certain percentage of their portfolio come from renewable energy. He pointed out this technology is not yet surviving in the marketplace. He cautioned against the City taking the lead on solar, which could result in technology on rooftops that is quickly outdated and requires disposal.

At the request of the majority of the Council, Ms. Hiniker agreed to pull together additional information and invite a member from CERTs or similar non-profit agency to provide a presentation on solar energy technology.

B. Addition of four full-time Firefighter/Paramedic positions

City Manager Hiniker summarized staff's recommendation to hire four additional full-time firefighter/paramedic positions. These full-time positions would spend approximately 80% of the time responding to paramedic calls and approximately 20% of the time responding to fire calls.

Ms. Hiniker clarified that this is not a request to have a department of all full-time responders. In 2014, the City added four (4) full-time firefighters upon establishing a combination model (FT and PT staff) to address a 45% increase in call volume over a 14-year period. In just the past four (4) years, call volume has increased another 30%. She explained that the additional positions would add capacity and relieve the burden on paid on-call staff who continue to experience increasing demands on their time. Ms. Hiniker added that since establishing duty crews in May requiring shift sign-ups, the gaps in coverage have become even more apparent. Ms. Hiniker described the goal is ultimately to reach capacity with 12 full-time responders, enough to provide a crew at both stations 24/7. This combination staffing model would continue to rely on part-time firefighters to meet call demands.

Ms. Hiniker described budget savings, increased revenues and realized efficiencies as mechanisms to finance these positions for the remainder of 2018. For 2019, she indicated the positions would be supported by both ambulance and fire budgets, with 80% charged to the ambulance fund (an enterprise fund) and 20% charged to the fire department fund. The savings of \$80,000 in the 2019 ambulance fund that resulted from the recent transition to Ramsey County dispatch would be used to help offset the cost of these added positions; an ambulance rate increase of 10-12% would also be needed in 2019. Ms. Hiniker further explained that the City's cost to the fire department fund for these added positions would be approximately \$95,000 after taking into account the cost-share of contract cities.

Chief Peterson stated his focus is to provide the best service possible. He reported that turnover continues to be an issue. Providing advanced life support (ALS) coverage is an expectation by state agencies, the Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board and Medical Direction. These positions would help the City meet state requirements and community expectations.

Chief Peterson described inefficient operations under current limitations of M-F, holidays off, full-time staff who are either paramedic or firefighter, but not both. He mentioned the high cost of turnover in addition to the department's reputation as a place that people come for training and then leave. He stated these full-time positions are attractive, and offer an opportunity for a career in the department. Additionally, response times will improve and complicated tasks will be completed more efficiently.

Councilmember Biehn believes it is important to provide ambulance service for its reimbursement component. He asked if the hours staff is required to work currently will be reduced, which was confirmed. Chief Peterson explained that half of the department is not meeting their percentage of required runs for their Relief Association benefits because call volumes are so high.

Councilmember Biehn asked whether the 80/20 formula split of personnel costs into ambulance/fire respectively would apply to current full-timers. City Manager Hiniker explained that while the cost of full-time administrative staff is currently between both departments, the full-time responders are currently EMS only employees and charged 100% to the ambulance fund. As described, all positions would be reposted as firefighter/paramedic with positions funded by both ambulance and fire departments, 80/20 split, respectively.

Councilmember Biehn asked whether the City is paying market rate and meeting current market standards, both of which Chief Peterson responded no. In response to both Councilmember Biehn and Jones who inquired as to whether this new model will fix the

issue, Chief Peterson responded that this will stabilize the department's response. He noted the department is on the low end of pay compared to other similar departments.

Councilmember Jones made a distinction that these positions are primarily paramedics, rather than full-time fire service responders. He stated the math supports the hiring eight (8) and even 12 in the future.

Chief Peterson added that full-time staff in the fire department is handling only 24% of the call volume currently, while part-time responders are handling 76% of the call volume. Councilmember Jones asked if staffing eight (8) full-time responders will get that closer to 50%. Chief Peterson stated that with eight (8) full-timers, the department will go to 57% full-time coverage, relying on part-time to cover 43%. A complement of 12 full-time responders would result in 90-100% ambulance coverage, with most fire and only occasional medical calls covered by part-time responders.

Councilmember Walsh inquired as to why current staff are not able to act in multiple capacities. Chief Peterson explained that is due to their job descriptions when they were hired. City Manager Hiniker explained that this request will change these classifications and require all jobs to be reposted and rehired.

In response to Councilmember Walsh's inquiry as to how calls are handled, Chief Peterson explained that when there is no crew scheduled, a station is paged. In absence of a response in five (5) minutes, the call is then routed to a mutual aid agency to respond. Councilmember Walsh commented on the poor practice of allowing ambulance calls to be diverted to other agencies for non-response. He added that he does not fear the perception of a full-time fire department, as he believes there are training, reports and other duties being completed by these employees.

Councilmember Biehn asked if we reciprocate mutual aid to other cities. Chief Peterson confirmed this, stating the department often responds to Mahtomedi and sometimes to Vadnais Heights and Lino Lakes. Councilmember Biehn asked whether Region's has offered any suggestions or opinions regarding staff levels. Chief Peterson reminded Council that Region's expressed serious concerns over the City's current staffing situation and were supportive of these proposed changes.

Councilmember Engstran clarified that nobody ever knows who is below and who is meeting his or her percentages. He said the full-time staff are doing smoke detectors and creating case numbers assigned to a station, which ends up counting as a call and consequently docking people on percentages. Councilmember Engstran stated he did not think that was ever cleared up, which may be why half the department did not make their percentages. He asked why not EMTs only positions, as Oakdale and Maplewood seem to be working just fine with that model.

Chief Peterson stated that related to the percentages, he had given those to the officers and was told they would relay them to the employees. He was not aware that employees did not get that information and said he could fix that going forward. Chief Peterson stated there is not a current practice of assigning smoke detectors to a station and that did not happen. Councilmember Engstran said that is not what he was told.

Councilmember Engstran stated that the two people who tendered their resignation this week were told they were fired anyway. He said they were told they could reapply for their jobs, but they could not get them back because they were not paramedics.

Chief Peterson stated that those employees were never told they were fired. He said that all employees were told they would need to reapply. Councilmember Engstran stated again, that is not the information out in the department right now. He said the call response numbers are way down while some people are sitting in their offices and not responding to ambulance calls.

City Manager Hiniker explained that different communities have different models for responding to medical calls. She stated it will never be her recommendation that the department rely on administrative staff to respond to calls. There are other responsibilities involved with those positions and she believed it would be problematic to begin using administration to cover the calls.

Mayor Emerson stated we cannot discuss employment matters in an open meeting.

Councilmember Engstran asked for an answer as to why the City cannot hire EMT / Firefighters. Chief Peterson stated that we can hire EMT / Firefighters, but that is not the efficient choice. The City is operating an Advanced Life Support service. By hiring Paramedic/Firefighters, the department can create a base crew in order to cover this service. He stated that the department could consider hiring part-time EMTs to complement base crews.

Councilmember Biehn inquired as to whether Alina has EMTs. Chief Peterson explained that they usually have Paramedic/EMT teams, which is a cost efficiency for an organization of 320 employees. Chief Peterson reported that Hennepin County has a mandate for paramedic teams.

In response to Mayor Emerson, Councilmembers Walsh and Biehn stated they felt fully informed and ready to vote, and added it should be done soon.

Councilmember Edberg agreed that Council should not be involved in the area of personnel. He postulated an intermediate space between policy discussion and personnel that is deserving of Council conversation. Councilmember Edberg noted there is an interplay between administration and strategy/policy that is deserving of Council discussion.

Councilmember Jones appreciated the fact that eight (8) means twelve, for which he is comfortable. He is also comfortable with raising the ambulance rates accordingly to address the financial and budgetary impacts required for the service.

Councilmember Biehn stated the department is able to charge for ambulance calls, which helps recover costs and also supports the fire piece. He does not want to delay the addition of staff and would even support 12 today because the City needs to staff paramedics for ambulance on a full-time basis. He does not want to rely on people coming in from home, or delayed response from another department. The sooner staffing levels are addressed, the quicker the department can assist with mutual aid calls and receive payment for those services.

Mayor Emerson stated the department has a good reputation and she wants them to have the resources needed to serve the residents and have pride in the department. She stated the paid on-call staff need some room to breathe as they are carrying the burden of call response currently. Mayor Emerson understands this is a change in the department and that change is difficult. A poll of the Council indicated the majority desired to revisit this item at the next Council meeting on August 15th.

12. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CITY MANAGER

➤ Emerald Ash Borer management update

City Manager Hiniker reported the City's intent to move forward with Rainbow Tree Care Service to treat select ash trees in its parks and other city-owned properties. Staff would begin a strategy to treat City's boulevard trees starting next year in which each year a third of the trees would be treated such that each tree would get treatment every third year. Ms. Hiniker stated that the City would not be divided into three quadrants; rather, dense populations of ash would be treated throughout the City.

City Engineer Burch reported that Rainbow Tree Care has provided good service to the City and its residents. Mr. Burch added that staff will be returning to Council once boulevard tree evaluations and recommendations are pulled together for next year. City Manager Hiniker added the plan for next year will be more comprehensive for urban tree management, rather than simply focusing on Emerald Ash Borer. There will be more policy discussion with Council to determine tree replacement ratios and its impact on the budget.

Ms. Hiniker clarified that residents concerned about boulevard trees can treat those trees this year, however, the City will not be doing so until next year.

Councilmember Edberg inquired as to the number of residents who have taken advantage of Rainbow Tree Care's services. Ms. Hiniker relayed that Rainbow Tree Care reported a healthy response from residents, especially after the initial Council presentation and resulting Press Publication article. Mr. Burch added that Rainbow has been tracking that response and can provide that information.

➤ Supplemental heating and cooling system at the Armory

Ms. Hiniker reported that with Council's approval, the Historical Society submitted an application for historical designation of the Armory building. Upon an official recommendation to be placed on the historical designation list, the Historical Society successfully applied for a grant to have architectural renderings for a HVAC system to help preserve its archives. This grant would pay about 50% of the cost of a system. Ms. Hiniker mentioned the City had budgeted for this in 2019, however, the Historical Society grant must be expensed in 2018. Ms. Hiniker mentioned bringing this before the Council at its next meeting for approval.

➤ Matoska boat launch

Ms. Hiniker stated that the lake level is up and so are its visitors. Parking at the Matoska boat launch has been impacted this year due to street reconstruction in the area. If Council gets any phone calls, this will likely occur again next year as a result of street reconstruction.

➤ Upcoming Events

- August 7 – National Night Out
- August 15th Wednesday – next City Council meeting
- August 21st, 6:00 p.m. – Budget Work Session
- September 25th - Drop in retirement reception for Mark Burch


- October 15th, 6:00 p.m.– Work Session
- Engineering Updates – Mark Burch
 - Road construction is progressing well
 - Utility work has been completed and curb is scheduled on Birch Lake Blvd S.
 - A large 16 inch water main broke and is being repaired under the freeway near the American Inn.
 - The flagpole project is progressing well. The fossil of a leg of an animal was found in the rock and will be incorporated back into the monument.
 - Vandals at Matoska Park busted the urinal and spray painted the walls at Podvin Park's restrooms.
 - Sports Center project is progressing well. A family friendly skate party is being planned to celebrate its reopening.

13. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Council, it was moved by Councilmember **Walsh** seconded by Councilmember **Jones** to adjourn the regular meeting at **8:35 p.m.**


Jo Emerson, Mayor

ATTEST:


Kara Coustry, City Clerk