

City of Vernon Center  
2/6/2024  
Regular Council Meeting

Council Present: Mayor Dana Ziegler, Wendy Bennett, Adam Finney, and Lisa Peterson.  
Absent – Emily Edwards.  
Staff Present: Clerk Kara Hansen, Public Works Supervisor Mark Willette  
Others Present: Susan Giefer & friend,

Mayor Ziegler opened the regular council meeting at 6:00 PM

### **Approve Agenda**

Councilor Peterson asked to pull the 1/8/2024 minutes out of the consent agenda, and review the capital funds from the consent agenda, and the fire department. PW Supervisor Willette asked to add item b. to Infrastructure Project and it was to be named “Re-bar Sidewalk, add item c. to Public Works and name it “Holtmeier,” and add Item d. to Public Works and it was to be named “Water Heater at Wastewater Treatment Plant.”

Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve the agenda with the changes. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Bennett. All approved. Motion carried.

### **Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda included the 1/8/2024 meeting minutes, Check Reconciliations, January Cash Balance Investment Report, Checks for Month showing in \$262,781.94 deposits and \$595,814.16 in checks, Savings and Loan Balance, City Revenue Guideline, 20-23 Project expense report, City Savings Balances, February and March calendar of events, BEC Call Log for January, VCFD January Report. Resolution 2024-07 Fireman’s Relief Donation, & Resolution 2024-08 Funds Transfer.

Councilor Peterson said in the 1/8/24 minutes in the Additional bills under “a” it states there was work being done at the county shop, it should be changed to “City Shop.” Clerk Hansen said she would update the minutes to reflect that and have them approved at the next meeting.

Councilor Peterson said in the Cap Funds excel sheet the “Total Savings Balance” and the “Cash Investment Report Sav Bal” difference was (35,727.72) making it out of balance. The Cash Investment Report Sav Bal was supposed to be zero. Clerk Hansen said she would look into the problem.

Councilor Peterson also said under liabilities the three bonds that were taken for the Project and DEED need to be added to the “Interfund Loan” section of the Cap Funds Excel Spreadsheet. Clerk Hansen said she would put those in.

Councilor Peterson said the Fire Department bought a new fire truck, and wondered if the hours it took to drive to purchase the fire truck and drive it back would count as hours needed documented for ESST time. Clerk Hansen said she would contact the League of Minnesota Cities on how to approach this.

Councilor Finney made a motion to approve the consent agenda as amended. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Peterson. All approved. Motion carried.

### **Additional Bills**

#### **a). Add'l Bills**

Clerk Hansen said the only items not accounted for on the credit card were two transactions from the BP totaling \$11.82 and Love’s Travel Stop totaling \$1.89. These transactions were from the trip taken to purchase the new fire truck. The Fire Department is aware these receipts are missing and are currently looking for them. If they can’t find them, they will write a check for the city for the total of \$13.71.

Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve the additional bills. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Bennett. All approved. Motion carried.

**b). PFA Loan Payment**

Clerk Hansen said this needed to be approved because it's a payment for a loan.

Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve the loan payment for PFA in the amount of \$2,785.00. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Finney. All approved. Motion carried.

**c). DropBox Full**

PW Supervisor Willette informed Clerk Hansen that he wasn't seeing documents she put into DropBox. Councilor Peterson also contacted Clerk Hansen and let her know she couldn't see any documents in there. Clerk Hansen said she looked into it, and discovered DropBox was completely full, and in order to fix the issue the city would have to purchase more space. Available options were to purchase an additional 2 terabytes, 3 terabytes, and 5 terabytes of data storage. Councilor Peterson asked if some items could be archived. Councilor Finney suggested the city purchase a separate hard drive and store older data on it, but recommended the city purchase more space in DropBox.

Councilor Finney made a motion to approve the upgrade in the Dropbox for \$119.88 for additional 2 Terabytes of data storage. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Peterson. All approved. Motion carried.

**Public Comment**

None

**Infrastructure Project**

**a). Main Street Sidewalks**

PW Supervisor Willette talked with Calvin Baarts, and had him talk to Engineer Knutson. PW Supervisor Willette said he believed everyone was on the same page. Councilor Finney asked if Mr. Baarts knew he had to maintain his sidewalks. PW Supervisor Willette said in their conversation Mr. Baarts understood that he had to maintain his sidewalks. Clerk Hansen was directed send a letter to Mr. Baarts, letting him know that he is responsible for maintaining the sidewalks. He will need to sign and return this letter to the city.

**b). D-Bar and Holtmeier**

Lisa Dehn, the owner of D-Bar, said her insurance company wants a gutter with rain vents that flow similar to what the post office has. PW Supervisor Willette will talk to Engineer Knutson to see what he can do.

PW Supervisor Willette contacted SEH about clay colored water at the WWTP. When the flow meter was calibrated, it was discovered to be filled with mud. PW Supervisor Willette shut off Structure A and let it fill up, and the water that filled in was also clay colored. Normally, it is clear. PW Supervisor Willette opened up the manholes around the project: he checked down the alleys, by the bank, Poplar St, County Rd 10, Railroad St, Third St, and the Waste Water Treatment plant. All the water by the manholes was clear except the waste water treatment plant. PW Supervisor Willette doesn't know where the colored water is coming from. Mayor Ziegler asked if we could put a balloon down the manhole by the WWTP and stop the water. PW Supervisor Willette said all the manholes are covered and he'd have to get a backhoe to pull them all up, and it could cause the street to have divots. He spoke with a representative from Holtmeier who told him they had camera'd those areas. Mayor Ziegler informed PW Supervisor Willette to watch the footage with the representative from Holtmeier. Mayor Ziegler said with the streets that had work done on them during the project, he expected it to be muddy, and if residents were concerned about going down the streets, they will have to park their vehicles on paved roads and walk to their vehicles. PW Supervisor Willette said he brought up two loads of gravel to put on trouble spots after the engineer inspected it, and a representative from Holtmeier inspected it and gave permission to lay it down. If residents want gravel laid down on the roads that were torn out for the

project, PW Supervisor Willette will need the engineer to inspect the roads in person and give their okay, and a representative from Holtmeier will also have to inspect the roads and give their okay.

**c). Fire department rental of Schwarz's property**

Todd Schwarz has sent the parameters for an agreement for the Fire Department to rent out the property at 103 Railroad. Right now, the deal is the fire department will store the trucks at his facility for \$1750 a month, fixed cost for the first two months, and \$250 a week for every week after plus the cost of electricity. This will be in the council meeting for March.

**Public Works**

**a). PW Supervisor Notes**

PW Supervisor Willette did work on the bathroom in city hall. He extended the pipe and dumped vinegar and baking soda down the drains and Clerk Hansen hasn't experience a bad smell ever since. The pipe is not above the roof life, but PW Supervisor Willette said he would not consider making it permanent until August.

PW Supervisor Willette said Engineer Chris Knutson will need to be present to give the council an update for the new onsite engineer for the remainder of the project. The council will need to approve the new onsite engineer so they and PW Supervisor Willette can have a discussion about Benco, the three phases for the WWTP, the temporary water services for Noy Farms, to isolate the valve on HWY 169 and County Rd 10, and water services for the agronomy building. According to Engineer Chris Knutson, a crew will be coming into town in the next two weeks to start moving supplies over to the WWTP.

PW Supervisor Willette said that a representative MRWA will be coming down on February 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Lead and Copper Rule so it can be submitted before the deadline of October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

PW Supervisor Willette said he ordered his reagents for the rest of the year for the WTP. He took samples on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January. The flows at the WWTP are good.

**b). Watershed Project Consideration**

Mayor Ziegler said if there are water issues that come up in the future to submit them to the Blue Earth River Watershed Planning Partnership.

**c). Summer help**

PW Supervisor Willette asked the council if there were plans to hire a temporary employee for the summer. The summer help would mow and help with camera work. It would be about 20-30 hours a week. Councilor Peterson said it was in the budget. Clerk Hansen and Councilor Edwards will work on it. Mayor Ziegler said this was a temporary position and wanted anyone hired for part-time temporary help to be aware that the position would end in September, but could go into October should the need arise.

Councilor Finney made a motion to hire temporary part-time employee for June 1<sup>st</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup> to be extended as seen fit for 20-30 hours a week. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Peterson. All approved. Motion carried.

**d). Water Heater**

The water heater stopped working in the WWTP. The plumber informed PW Supervisor Willette to purchase water heaters, and the plumber will install it next week. One will go in the shop and the other will go to the WWTP.

**PFA Compliance Packet**

Clerk Hansen said the council should review this to make sure it looks good and approve it and she will turn it in to PFA. This will be approved at the next meeting.

## **Miscellaneous**

### **Invoice for September Fire**

Clerk Hansen said this invoice was never paid. Mayor Ziegler asked Clerk Hansen to call the insurance company and inquire further.

### **100 Poplar St E Satisfaction of Mortgage Paper**

Judd Schultz stated the SCDP loan made on the house had met its repayment requirements and can be satisfied. Mayor Ziegler will need to sign it, and Clerk Hansen will mail it back to Judd Schultz. Susan Giefer asked if the city filed it with the county. Mayor Ziegler said it was her job to file it with DEED, and Judd Schultz will need it for his records.

Councilor Bennett made a motion to approve the Satisfaction of Mortgage Paper for 100 Poplar St E. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Finney. All approved. Motion carried.

## **Citizen Concern**

### **a). Citizen Concern #1**

Mayor Ziegler informed Clerk Hansen to send a letter to the residents, about their vehicle with expired tags, and reference the ordinance.

### **b). Citizen Concern #2**

Clerk Hansen was contacted by this resident who was concerned about paying for the replacement of their sewer lateral. She was informed by Councilor Peterson to reach out to Judd Shultz of MVAC, MRWA, and Rural Development to see if there were programs available to help with funding for this resident. The city has had programs in the past where the city pays a contractor to do the sewer lateral replacement, and the resident would pay the city back through their property taxes. Clerk Hansen was instructed to find out how much the city spent on similar programs in the past so the council could look into it as a potential solution. She was also instructed to put this in either the consent agenda or the Infrastructure Project line item for future meetings. Mayor Ziegler instructed Clerk Hansen to write a letter to the resident and give them references to MVAC, MWRA, and RD.

### **102 West St N Property**

Clerk Hansen said she reached out to Judd Schultz of DEED who informed her that before the property sells the city will have to make a motion that the council approves to pass on the loan to the new owners. Judd Schultz informed Clerk Hansen that DEED will need to know when the sale happens so they can prepare a Satisfaction for the lien and repayment agreement with the new owner for the remaining balance. The former property owner, Susan Giefer, will be responsible for recording the Satisfaction and the new owner would need to provide the recording fee for the repayment agreement. Susan Giefer asked about the water meter on the 102 West St N Property. PW Supervisor Willette said the council informed him that all water meters need to be installed by a licensed plumber, and the responsibility for the cost falls on the home owner, per city ordinance. Susan Giefer would need to prove that the water meter was installed by a licensed plumber then she needs to provide the number of the plumber, his license, and if it was pressure tested. Susan Giefer said it was not installed by a licensed plumber and there were plans to do so. She was informed that all ordinances are on the city's website. PW Supervisor Willette told Susan Giefer to let him know when a plumber was going to be present to install the water meter correctly so he can be there to make sure it is done properly, and to take pictures.

Susan Giefer said that she came to a meeting last year and she thought there was an agreement to let the new property owner assume the loan. Mayor Ziegler said they are still in agreement with having the party who buys the property assume the loan, but the city council has to meet with the person who

City of Vernon Center  
2/6/2024  
Regular Council Meeting

purchases the property and the city council has to be sure they are willing to assume it. Pre-approval for the sale needs to be run by Judd Schultz of MVAC, and then the former property owner and the new owner will come to a city council meeting together and the city will approve the new property owner to assume the responsibility for the rest of the loan. Susan Giefer and the purchaser of the property can also sign a document that can be presented to the council and the council can approve it from there. Susan Giefer asked if the property's sewer and water laterals were already inspected. PW Supervisor Willette said the sewer was disconnected but it wasn't capped at the foundation. Susan then asked about the water line and the inspection. PW Supervisor Willette said that all properties need point of sale documents and they are only good for three years. The sewer goes down to the street on the property, but the water line is from the curb stop to the property.

Councilor Peterson asked if the sump pump that is draining onto the side walk is still a problem. She asked if it was supposed to be fixed with the project. PW Supervisor Willette said it will be completed next year when the project is done. He informed Susan Giefer to put a flag out where they want the water to drain and the construction crew will do that when they go down Poplar St. PW Supervisor Willette will get ahold of the Engineer and ask how deep they want that

**Next Meeting Scheduled for 3/7/2024**

#### **Adjourn**

Councilor Bennett made a motion to adjourn. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Finney. All approved. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:14 PM.