

TAYLORS FALLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

City Hall, Council Chambers

Monday, February 27, 2023

The Agenda for this Meeting was posted Thursday, February 23, 2023 at City Hall, the Post Office. Copies were emailed to residents requesting such, and the Press was notified.

CALL TO ORDER

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mayor Brandon Weiberg.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag was recited.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Brandon Weiberg, Tim Grote, Larry Julik-Heine, Troy Aanonsen

Members Absent: Lee Samuelson

Others Present: Clerk Clerk-Treasurer Mary Tomnitz, Legal Counsel Knaak, Brian Berg, Cheryl Grote, Fay Caneday, Kevin Schumann, Carol Schumann, Diane Nelson, Sandra Berg, Geri Aanonsen, Darrel Caneday, Becky Caneday, Julie Samuelson, Molly Irish, Diane Dedon, John Tangen, Dan Brown

Mayor Weiberg nominated Fay Caneday as Secretary Pro Tem for the meeting. The consensus of the council was to allow Fay Caneday to take the minutes. Council Member Grote requested the Clerk-Treasurer review the minutes.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Council Member Aanonsen made a motion to postpone item #1 under New Business: "Scheduled Closed Meeting for Full Time Staff Performance Evaluation" because a council member was not in attendance. Legal Counsel Knaak stated such a meeting must be posted, but the employee can determine if it's closed or not.

Moved by Council Member Aanonsen, second by Mayor Weiberg, to postpone the first item under New Business. Council Member Aanonsen, Mayor Weiberg - aye; Council Member Julik-Heine, Grote - nay. Motion failed.

Council Member Aanonsen also requested a public forum be added to the agenda of each council meeting.

Council Member Grote noted that adding to the agenda after posting does not give our citizens the opportunity to be fully engaged in whatever subject matter is proposed to be added, nor does it allow the Council to perform due diligence on the topic. He recommended an exception be made if there is a matter that is time-sensitive and could pose risk to the city if it were not acted upon. In this specific case, he noted the City has had a long history of having public comment at the first meeting of each month, and people have become accustomed to that. Council Member Aanonsen responded he will listen to citizens' concerns and will not obstruct their ability to speak.

Moved by Council Member Aanonsen, second by Mayor Weiberg to add an Open Forum to the agenda. Council Member Aanonsen, Mayor Weiberg - aye; Council Member Julik-Heine, Grote - nay. Motion failed.

Mayor Weiberg moved and Council Member Grote second to add Charitable Gambling License for the Lions Club to new Business. Motion unanimously approved.

Moved by Mayor Weiberg, second by Council Member Grote, to adopt the amended agenda. Motion unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Discussion opened with Council Member Aanonsen stating he opposes approving the Consent Agenda because:

1. minutes of previous meetings should be included and they are not;
2. a check was listed as being paid to Menards for fuel, and another for motor fuels, but they are listed under wages and salaries; Clerk-Treasurer Tomnitz responded it was an error and she would check on it.

3. several account balances are in the red: a) the general fund balance report shows a negative \$100,135; b) the expenditure budget is reported to be 104% over the limit; c) debt service and city building funds are negative; d) \$500 is budgeted for council education, but \$700 has been spent. This account is 40% over budget, and his own education expense has not been reimbursed, and it's only February.

Council Member Aanonsen wondered how Council can pay any bills when accounts show there is no money. Council Member Grote responded that he shares some of the same thoughts and concerns. He would love to have a training session with the city's accounting firm to better understand. He said the city receives local government aid and property taxes in December and July and that Fund balances are to support operating expenses until the payments are received.

Council Member Grote asked if the auditing services are an ongoing expense. Clerk-Treasurer Tomnitz stated additional auditing expenses were never budgeted, and is one of the reasons the budget is in the negative. Council Member Aanonsen reported the 2022 audit still isn't complete. Some payments reported in 2023 should be in the 2022 records. Clerk-Treasurer Tomnitz confirmed there was a clerical error when coding one of the payments.

Council Member Grote asked how the contracted police service is paid, as the Year-to-Date amount is the same as last month.

Council Member Aanonsen commented this Council paid a 2021 invoice in 2023. He doesn't feel he has enough information to make an informed decision; that he doesn't have confidence there is the money to pay the bills. Mayor Weiberg asked if the general fund is linked to the checking account? Clerk-Treasurer Tomnitz directed Council to "look at the bottom line, there is money."

Council member Aanonsen asked if payroll checks shouldn't show number of overtime hours, personal time off hours, etc.. Legal Counsel Knaak urged Council to prioritize for the auditor an explanation of the numbers. He stressed this was a matter of urgency, and that Council should prioritize which checks get paid. There was some discussion on which items on the consent agenda could be paid and others not, and that the City has never bounced a check. Legal Counsel Knaak suggested Council approve all expenditures on the condition that a call be made to the bank in the morning to verify there are funds to cover the expenses.

The auditor will be here in March to talk about the audit.

Council Member Grote stated the city has to submit the fund balance to the State at end of 2022, and requested to see it. This balance had to be reported when revenue was received from the state. It would be evidence we have the funds. ***Moved by Council Member Grote, second by Council member Aanonsen, to approve the checks with the contingency the Clerk-Treasurer calls the bank to verify funds are available to cover check list. Mayor Weiberg, Council Member Grote, Council Member Julik-Heine - aye; Council member Aanonsen - nay. Motion passed.***

Clerk-Treasurer Tomnitz stated she can look at the bank balance online and send a screen shot to the Council Members.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

There are no minutes of previous meetings.

OLD BUSINESS

Website

Mayor Weiberg reported his research into web design companies. The current provider will be meeting with him and the Clerk-Treasurer later this week. He has invited others to join them, but stressed everyone will be sitting around one computer monitor. As Council Members Grote and Aanonsen expressed interest in also attending, Legal Counsel said the meeting should be posted with the proviso "a quorum may be present and city business will be conducted."

Moved by Council Member Grote, second by Council Member Julik-Heine, to post an open meeting for Thursday, March 2, 2023, at 1 pm when Bolton & Menk will describe their abilities to provide web site services. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Works Superintendent

Council Member Grote reported the interview team to be: Council Member Samuelson, employee Paul Stenger, Clerk-Treasurer Tomnitz and himself. They interviewed three of the five candidates as two were no shows. Using a scoring mechanism, they determined two of the three were well qualified, and they decided to proceed with Kevin Gruber. Council Member Grote drafted an offer letter. Gruber requested a tour and two changes to the offer: start date changed to March 21, 2023 and a beginning 40 PTO balance upon hire. The interview team deemed these to be reasonable requests and included them in the offer letter. The offer is contingent upon Council's approval. Today Gruber accepted the offer and signed it. Council Member Grote checked references and all were good.

During discussion Council Member Aanonsen expressed his concern there should be more Council involvement in the hiring process. Mayor Weiberg stated there should be an open Council meeting to meet any final candidates.

Moved by Council Member Julik-Heine, second by Council Member Aanonsen, to approve the hire of Kevin Gruber as Public Works Superintendent and asking Council to waive a second interview. Motion passed unanimously.

Zoning/Coordinator Position Update

The Mayor reported there have been a few applicants, but none meeting criteria. The vacancy will be posted for a longer period of time, and online. Some candidates said the pay was too low. \$32 - \$34 was posted. The Mayor would like applicants to say what wage they want.

NEW BUSINESS

Schedule Closed Meeting for Full Time City Staff Performance Evaluation

Council Member Aanonsen stated his goal for this item is to find challenges facing staff; learn how Council can help; congratulate them on the good things they're doing; learn how to improve services more efficiently; and develop position descriptions. He recommended an evaluation form be a point system. Council Member Aanonsen made motion to schedule such a meeting, with second by the Mayor.

State statute requires City set such meetings as closed, but the employee can choose to have open meeting.

Council Member Grote expressed some concerns: a) The Clerk-Treasurer had a review on December 12, 2022, and her next review is December 2023; b) normally the new department head would be responsible for Paul Stenger; c) wonders if it's fair to employees to have three new council members review them; d) not good to get review schedule out of sync; e) concerned about public perception of the Council.

Legal Counsel Knaak explained the Council can meet with staff as long as it's posted, and they can do employee reviews at any time. He suggested another option would be to have a workshop, where no city business is conducted and no votes are taken.

Council Member Grote said the workshop should include new Public Works supervisor, so therefore should wait until April, making it a goal-setting session.

Council Member Julik-Heine expressed his opinion Council liaisons should have regular meetings with supervisors and then bring issues to the Council.

Council Member Grote then made a "friendly amendment" to the motion. That is, make the meeting an all-staff workshop, including temp staff.

Council Member Aanonsen changed his motion to schedule a workshop of Council and each employee to deal with issues relating to what staff needs; that this is NOT an evaluation but attempt to make things more efficient. Council Member Grote desired the meeting be by department and not by individual employee.

Moved by Council Member Aanonsen, second by Council Member Grote, to schedule with Council an employee workshop by department, at a date to be determined at next Council. Council Members Aanonsen, Grote, Mayor Weiberg - aye; Council Member Julik-Heine - nay. Motion passed.

Board of Review

Mayor Weiberg reported there will be a meeting with Chisago County on April 13, 2023 starting at 6 pm. The county requested full council attendance.

HPC Application Review

Mayor Weiberg reported there are two applicants interested in joining the HPC: Dan Brown and Geri Aanonsen. Currently the commission consists of two individuals: Chair Joanne Kuntemeier and Leslie Johnson. The commission must have seven members. Council Member Julik-Heine believes the HPC chair should make recommendations to Council, who then vote.

Moved by Council Member Aanonsen, second by Mayor Weiberg to approve both Geri Aanonsen and Dan Brown to the Heritage Preservation Commission. Council Member Grote, Mayor Weiberg - aye; Council Member Julik-Heine - nay; Council Member Aanonsen recused himself. Motion carries.

Lions and Bingo

The Lions Club will host an Easter bingo on March 31 at 6:30 pm. ***Moved by Council Member Julik-Heine, second by Mayor Weiberg, to approve the Lions Club request for a charitable gambling license. Motion passed unanimously.***

LIAISON OR COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Council Member Grote reported that he and Council Member Samuelson are looking into options for live stream and video recording of council meetings. He also reported someone has been hired to help the Clerk-Treasurer.


ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Council Member Aanonsen, second by Council Member Grote, to adjourn the meeting of the Taylors Falls City Council held this Monday, February 27, 2023. Motion passed unanimously.

Being there was no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.



Brandon Weiberg, Mayor



Fay Caneday, Secretary Pro Tem

APPROVED
March 13, 2023