

MINUTES
TAYLORS FALLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING
City Hall, Council Chambers
Monday, April 12, 2021

The Agenda for this Meeting was posted Wednesday, April 7, 2021 at City Hall, the Post Office, and on the City's website. 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 Mike Buchite.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Mike Buchite, Ross Rivard, Larry Julik-Heine, Mary Murphy, Troy Aanonsen

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Clerk-Treasurer Elizabeth Nealley, Fire Chief Jacob Vodenka-Reed, Sergeant Cliff Sheppeck (Chisago County Sheriff's Office), Brad Falteysek (Auditor, Abdo Eick & Meyers), Jim Stein (Stein Insurance), Paula Fitzgerald (Novel Energy), Katherine Johnson, Denise Martin (Chisago County Press)

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

New Business item #11 was added: Resolution 21-04-04 Transferring funds in amount of \$30,000 to the capital equipment fund (420) to cover purchase of street sweeper. Motion by Julik-Heine / Murphy to approve the amended Agenda for the Monday, April 12, 2021 Taylors Falls City Council Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

The agenda items were followed in this order: Item 2, item 4, item 1, item 3, item 11, items 5-10 as listed.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Rivard / Aanonsen to approve/accept the following Consent Agenda items: Minutes from previous meetings; Staff reports; Commission, Board, or Committee minutes/reports; Correspondence; as well as the following items:

Claims & payroll

The City Council approved by Consent Agenda payment of payroll check numbers 7962-7977 totaling \$11,858.34; as well as check numbers 31633-31668 and electronic check numbers 6302532-6302541 totaling \$35,206.76 for the previous month's expenditures.

Shafer Township fire contract

The contract is for a two year period: 2021 - 2022. A copy of the contract is not yet available, per Councilmember Murphy.

Solid waste license renewals

Expiration date is 3/31/22, permit is contingent on receiving applications and certificates of insurance. Croix Valley Pickup, Chisago City; SRC dba Town & Country Disposal, Wyoming; Waste Management of Northern Wisconsin, Somerset; Dem-Con Companies LLC, Shakopee; Shafer Rolloff LLC, Chisago City; Chisago Lakes Sanitation LLC, Chisago City.

Payment of invoice from Olson's Sewer Service for repair of sewer main on First Street (field approved)

Cost is \$9,234.32.

Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC FORUM

Katherine Johnson spoke about New Business item #4, Conditional use permit for solar panels on Joe and Ruth Stein's property. She explained she was in opposition to this, and that it was an eyesore and blight on the landscape. She said she had spoken to a family who sold their home and moved away because of solar panels. She asked that the City Council refuse the conditional use permit.

Sgt. Cliff Sheppeck gave an update, and said he wants to attend quarterly in case anyone has any questions. He said he has been working on a couple of issues. Evening traffic has exploded, especially on weekends. He likes to do foot patrol, get out and walk, and speak to people. He has already met most of the business owners. He also mentioned that he had touched base with the city attorney about the Springs Inn.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Financial audit for 2020 by Abdo Eick and Meyers

Brad Falteysek gave a presentation about the city's financial audit for 2020. His presentation showed six internal control findings. (The City has a Council-approved Internal Control Policy that if enforced, would help prevent these findings). There was one legal compliance finding (that can be prevented in the future by enforcement of established procedures in all departments). The presentation explained that the normal general fund balance policy is 35 to 50%; for Taylors Falls it is at 67.4%. Brad mentioned the tax abatement debt will drop off (fund 900). There was discussion about the water fund because it was below the minimum target balance and it was brought up that rates haven't been raised for a long time and might be need to be looked at. The presentation then showed the tax rate in comparison to class 5 cities and some of the other Chisago County cities, with statistics for the past three years. The tax rate for Taylors Falls is lower than these class 5 cities and higher than these other Chisago County cities. Several more graphs were shown breaking down all of this information. Discussion followed.

Motion by Murphy / Julik-Heine to accept the 2020 financial audit report from Abdo Eick and Meyers. Motion carried unanimously.

Insurance policy for 2021 by Stein Insurance Agency

Jim Stein provided a presentation to explain the 2021 Insurance Policy and answer any questions. He explained that the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust had completed an evaluation of the various properties and showed a breakdown of each location with the value. He explained that the League guarantees that if a property is damaged it can be replaced even if it takes up to 50% more of that evaluation. He mentioned his previous conversation that day with Mayor Buchite and answered his questions such as that equipment coverage is automatically insured without having to update any schedules. He said that each year the city accepts the Minnesota state statutory immunity coverage, and he asked that a resolution be made to accept this at this meeting. Jim let Councilmember Aanonsen know he could call with any questions, since he was reviewing this quickly. He said that Mayor Buchite did mention what happens regarding a potential violation of the open meeting law and explained that they do have defense coverage here. He brought out a few changes to some of the property schedules compared to last year that are reflected in the premiums. He answered the Mayor's question about the liability limits being higher than the statutory immunity, and explained the reason for that. He said they offer an extra liability limit every few years to the City, but they never take him up on it. The Mayor thanked him for the offer. Discussion followed.

Motion by Murphy / Julik-Heine to accept the report regarding the 2021 Insurance policy with the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust, as well as further move that the City does not waive its statutory limits regarding insurance coverage. Motion carried unanimously.

Purchase of street sweeper from MN Dept of Transportation

Public Works Superintendent Mike Kriz referred to the sweeper as 2008, but it is actually a 2009 sweeper. He explained in his report why this was needed and how it was a good deal. Mayor Buchite explained that he already had the Minnesota Department of Transportation go ahead and deliver the used street sweeper to City Hall. He authorized a payment of \$30,000 to be given to them, but not cashed until after the City Council meeting vote. If the Council votes against the purchase, MNDoT will pick up the sweeper and not cash the payment. Discussion followed.

Motion by Rivard / Murphy to to approve the request from Public Works to purchase a 2009 Elgin street sweeper from the Minnesota Department of Transportation at a cost of \$30,000.00. Motion carried unanimously.

Conditional use permit for solar panels on Joe and Ruth Stein's property

Councilmember Rivard explained that the Planning Commission recommended approval of this CUP. He said that the panels would be out of sight on this property. Councilmember Julik-Heine said this new technology would reduce the carbon footprint. Councilmember Murphy said that residents are allowed to have them and that she supports green energy. Councilmember Aanonsen said that there are responsibilities to the people of Taylors Falls who have brought up concerns. Discussion followed. Mayor Buchite said that after the approval of the panels on this property, the substation will only hold one more megawatt and he wants the City to buy solar panels to put on the City's property by the water processing ponds.

Findings of Fact:

1. The conditional use permit is consistent with the comprehensive plan and development policies of the City.
2. The use will not create an excessive demand on existing parks, schools, streets, and other public facilities and utilities which serve or are proposed to serve the area.

3. The use will be sufficiently compatible or separated by distance or screening from adjacent development or land so that existing development will not be depreciated in value and there will not be deterrence to development of vacant land.
4. The structure and site shall have an appearance that will not have an adverse effect upon adjacent properties.
5. The use in the opinion of the City is reasonably related to the overall needs of the City and to the existing land use.
6. The use is consistent with the purposes of the zoning ordinance and the purposes of the zoning district in which the applicant intends to locate the proposed use.
7. The use will not cause traffic hazard or congestion.

Motion by Julik-Heine / Murphy to approve the recommendation from the planning commission to approve a conditional use permit to allow solar panels to be installed at 400 Herberg Road. Motion carried 4 to 1 with Councilmember Aanonsen voting nay.

Grading quotes for downtown commercial property

City Engineer Jake Guzik of Bolton and Menk was asked to prepare and produce a grading plan to improve the surface drainage of the downtown commercial (former MNDoT property). City Engineer Jake Guzik completed the grading plan. Zoning Administrator Steve Heth was asked to get some contractor quotes. RE Peterson proposed \$17,863.50 with seed and mulch, and \$25,388.50 with hydroseed.

Motion by Murphy / Julik-Heine to approve the regrade of the downtown commercial (former MNDoT) property by RE Peterson, using seed and mulch, at a cost of \$17,863.50. Motion carried unanimously.

Repair of masonry on TF entrance sign

Quotes were provided by North Lakes Masonry and J.J. Haley Construction.

Motion by Rivard / Aanonsen to approve having the masonry on the Taylors Falls entrance sign repaired by North Lakes Masonry at a cost of \$1,500.00, from the special projects fund. Motion carried unanimously.

Fire Dept request to apply for DNR Grant

Fire Chief Vodenka-Reed explained that this grant has a \$5,000.00 project cap, and that this grant would allow them to purchase two sets of turnout gear for the cost of one.

Motion by Murphy / Julik-Heine to approve the request from the Fire Department to apply for the DNR 50/50 grant. Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 21-04-01 Accepting sponsorship donation from Xcel Energy

Xcel Energy provided a sponsorship donation to the Fire Department in the amount of \$3,000.00 to be used for the purchase of a rescue tripod.

Motion by Julik-Heine / Aanonsen to approve Resolution 21-04-01 Accepting sponsorship donation from Xcel Energy to the Taylors Falls Fire Department in the amount of \$3,000.00 to be used for the purchase of a rescue tripod. Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 21-04-02 Transferring funds from the general fund to a separate Wannigan Days fund

Wannigan Days funds have previously been tracked with a spreadsheet. Clerk-Treasurer Nealley requested that a new fund be set up for the Wannigan Days funds so they could be properly accounted for with the City's accounting software. The remaining balance from 2020 was \$3,760.75. For 2021, \$1,500.00 was budgeted by the City, and so far there has been \$79.83 in expenses, which comes to a total balance of \$5,180.92 to be transferred from the general fund to the new Wannigan Days fund (231).

Motion by Murphy / Julik-Heine to approve Resolution 21-04-02 transferring funds in the amount of \$5,180.92 from the general fund to a separate Wannigan Days fund. Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 21-04-03 Transferring funds from the general fund to the TIF 1-3 fund

The City's financial advisors, Ehlers, recommended that \$384.00 be transferred to this old decertified TIF fund (401) to zero it out.

Motion by Rivard / Julik-Heine to approve Resolution 21-04-03 Transferring funds in the amount of \$384.00 from the general fund to the TIF 1-3 fund (401) per the advise of Ehlers. Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 21-04-04 Transferring funds in the amount of \$30,000 to the capital equipment fund

The Council discussed what fund to take the \$30,000.00 from to cover the purchase of a used street sweeper (see item #3).

Motion by Julik-Heine / Murphy to approve Resolution 21-04-04 Transferring \$30,000 from the community center fund (350) to the capital equipment fund (420) to cover the purchase of a used street sweeper. Motion carried unanimously.

LIAISON OR COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Council Member Troy Aanonsen (Economic Development Commission liaison)

- said the EDC met and they have a new applicant. He wants to meet with Fire Chief Vodenka-Reed monthly.

Council Member Ross Rivard (Planning Commission liaison)

- said the PC might meet next month.

Council Member Larry Julik-Heine (Parks & Recreation Commission liaison)

- said that the PRC had a potential new member. They set dates for their yearly clean up items like repainting the big yellow chair and clean up of the adopted highway. He said that a resident had proposed planting prairie grass at Heritage Park. He mentioned the Highway 8 Task Force was having a virtual open house April 12-29.

Council Member Mary Murphy (Heritage Preservation Commission liaison)

- said she will comp up with a recommendation for the law enforcement contract next month. The HPC meeting is on Wednesday.

Mayor Mike Buchite

- spoke about the safe schools initiative, including the county's involvement in child welfare. He said that he met with the Chisago Lakes School District Superintendent, Dean Jennissen who said that if Taylors Falls wasn't increasing their property taxes, they might do so. Mayor Buchite said that he told the Superintendent: "You run your district, we will run our City. We are running it just fine." He said that residents were asking to have porta potties put in place downtown. No, he said. There are 24 public bathrooms in the City, not including those in the City parks. He said they smell bad and are ugly. Then he thanked Clerk-Treasurer Nealley for all she does and said really good job with the resolutions for the Council.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Julik-Heine / Murphy to adjourn the meeting of the Taylors Falls City Council held this Monday, April 12, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

Being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Ross Rivard, Vice-Mayor

Elizabeth Nealley, Clerk-Treasurer

APPROVED

Monday, December 13, 2021