

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, January 18, 2022

CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

The Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Olivia, Minnesota, was called to order by Mayor Hawkinson at 7:00 P.M.

Council Members Present: Jon Hawkinson, Tom Kalahar, George Ebbers, and Landon Padrnos.

Council Members Absent: Blanca Ferguson

Others present: Aaron Walton, City Attorney; Amber Dale, Utilities Coordinator/Accounts Manager; Chief Seehusen, OFD; Kendra Lyngaas, SEH (via Zoom); Dan Coughlin, City Administrator (via Zoom); anonymous / unidentified participants in person and via Zoom; and Nikki Pregler, Deputy Clerk (via Zoom).

AGENDA

Motion by Padrnos, second by Ebbers: to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Ebbers, second by Kalahar: to approve the presented Consent Agenda items:

- A. Regular Meeting Minutes of January 8, 2022
- B. Confirmation of Mayoral Appointment of Cathalina Zuniga to the Planning Commission
- C. Resolution 2022-05, Data Inventory for Calendar year 2022
- D. Resolution 2022-06, Approval of Donation to the Olivia Fire Department
- E. Resolution 2022-07, Authorize Step Increase and End Probation for Christi Weidemann
- F. Resolution 2022-08, Authorize Step Increase and End Probation for Nikki Pregler
- G. Resolution 2022-09, Authorize Step Increase for Aaron Clouse
- H. Approval of Financial Audit Engagement Agreement with Abdo Financial Solutions for FY 2021
- I. Acknowledgement of Current (unchanged) Liquor License Fees and Charges for 2022
- J. January Payables #2

Motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 2022-10, Acceptance of Grant Agreement for Airport Equipment Replacement

Coughlin shared that this grant process began late last year to secure funds to replace a tractor and snow blower at the airport. MnDOT moved the grant request forward however, they clarified a rule whereby if the City keeps an asset with any remaining value, the City must "buy back" the percentage MnDOT originally contributed to that original purchase, via this grant. That dollar amount is approximately \$33,000; which at the current price of used equipment, is considered a reasonable price and a smart decision to retain those assets. Public Works would like to keep the old units for use as a

backup unit as well as helping with summer stump grinding and other public works and parks tasks. The equipment has been well taken care of and at the price of used equipment today, it makes sense to keep them.

Mayor Hawkinson thanked Coughlin for his efforts in securing this grant.

Motion by Padrnos, second by Ebberts: to approve Resolution 2022-10, Acceptance of Grant Agreement for Airport Equipment Replacement. Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Additions/New Business

Resolution 2022-11, SRTS Trail Phase 1 Project Acceptance and Final Payment Authorization

Coughlin introduced the Safe Routes to School topic and documents which were added to the packet as new business. He explained that a small percentage of the full payment is typically held back until all work is completed to satisfaction and all documents have been filed. Kendra Lyngaas from SEH joined via Zoom and she agreed that typically a small amount due is held back until all items are buttoned up. She read through some of the totals in the document provided which outlined the total cost of the project, the dollar amounts already paid and the remaining balance due of \$22,202.22. She then offered to answer any additional questions. None were asked.

Motion by Kalahar, second by Ebberts: to approve Resolution 2022-11, SRTS Trail Phase 1 Project Acceptance and Final Payment Authorization. Motion passed unanimously.

No additional business was brought forward.

Public Forum

Mayor Hawkinson temporarily recessed the regular meeting and opened the public forum at 7:10 p.m.

No public comments were made so Mayor Hawkinson reopened the regular meeting at 7:11 p.m.

REPORTS

Ditch 63 Hearing – January 4

Kalahar asked Coughlin if he would attend this meeting and share some comments on behalf of the city. Coughlin attended the meeting and learned that the city will have a major role to play in paying for any upgrades done to this particular ditch section. Because of this, the city should remain vigilant and engaged in this discussion on behalf of the taxpayers. He brought a concern forward to the County Board related to the Waste Water Treatment facility being inundated by runoff rain water in recent years which has caused the ditch to back up and flood the plant on occasion. He argued that the current ditch cannot handle the increased water flow of the many tile systems continuing to be added to it. If an overflow occurs, the Waste Water Treatment facility may have to be taken off line to protect the electrical systems in the control room. Then the City has to notify the duty officer at the state level that the facility is off line and that there is the potential for direct discharge of the sanitary sewer system into the drainage ditch. The County plan proposed a 5X increase in water flow away from this area via this ditch, which sounds like a solution; however it also rushes even more water to those farther

downstream. The increased flows could also have a boomerang effect if the ditch were to back up after a major rain event, because even more and faster running water would potentially get backed up in a short period of time. Coughlin expressed concern about some of the unintended consequences that were not being mentioned in this proposal. The current study did not seem to fully consider or encompass the effects on this region, such as the potential for a bottleneck in the system and the effect of increasing connections to a ditch of finite size and capacity. He also noted that ditches are largely unregulated and what law exists is 100 years old and is inadequate for managing modern drainage systems.

Kalahar added that the 100-year-old ditch law is out of date as things have changed dramatically over the years. He explained that nearly all of the water runoff currently ends up in creeks and rivers, none of it is retained. He agreed with Coughlin in that the downstream impacts are not being considered in this current County plan. He would like to see municipalities like the City of Olivia, bring this topic to the Association of Greater Minnesota Cities and he feels it is important for cities to attend more of these meetings because they do pertain to city interests. He feels that this is an issue that must be faced as the ditches are at capacity now. The next step could be increasing the ditch size, which would come at a considerable cost.

Mayor Hawkinson asked what other communities are impacted by this ditch. Kalahar stated that any community in the Minnesota River Watershed area could be impacted by this water drainage; with our area connecting up to the Minnesota River via Beaver Creek.

Mayor Hawkinson asked if any other entities expressed concerns. Coughlin said that a few nonprofit group representatives attended and brought similar concerns forward. Coughlin pointed out that the statutory language is out of date and does not take into account current issues. Those in attendance wanted to make their concerns known and enter them into the public record. He stated that while the drainage of agricultural land is important, so is the sanitary sewer system utilized by 1000+ homes in Olivia.

Padrinos asked if Commissioner Snow shared any comments at this meeting. Coughlin stated that he did not comment much at the meeting, however he spoke later with Snow. The Commissioner expressed that he understood the concerns and he hoped that the next phase of the study would look at this issue deeper. Coughlin encouraged the County to make sure the next phase of this process includes the necessary research and he empathized with Commissioner because such issues make it very difficult to find a balanced solution to the competing interests in situations like this.

Mayor Hawkinson thanked Coughlin for his attendance and representation of the city at the meeting.

Renville County EDA Advisory Committee – January 11

Coughlin and Susie Lang attended the meeting. The most significant topic was the County's new tax abatement plan/policy to standardize and streamline the process to encourage development of commercial and residential properties in the county. Both of them were encouraged by this progress, as it should be very beneficial to all involved.

EDA – January 12

Ebbers shared that Cathy Baumgartner was confirmed again as the president for 2022 and Tom McDonnell was named as the vice president. Some discussion took place regarding the Grand Apartments and potentially renegotiating the terms Southwest Minnesota Housing has with the EDA regarding redevelopment financing that was put in place several years ago. They plan to hold a special meeting on Thursday to discuss that topic further.

Park and Trails Update

Mayor Hawkinson shared that Public Works staff have been busy maintaining the skating rink at Henton Park. Coughlin stated that they have received multiple positive comments regarding their efforts. He continued that the staff are trying hard to continue to maintain the trail as well, considering the challenging weather they have had to face. The utilities staff also jump in to help out when and where they can.

Other Reports of Council / Staff

Kalahar shared an article he read in the Willmar newspaper stating that pandemic relief funds could be used to remove blighted buildings. He inquired if the old Olivia Apartments could be addressed in this way. Padrnos said that property has a new owner and they have stepped forward to make plans and improvements to that property. Coughlin stated that the city is working with that property owner currently to investigate repurposing the structures or removal of them. They will work together with multiple entities to try and secure grant opportunities, as they have done successfully in the past.


Kalahar then shared the recent discovery that Casey's East has imposed a "pay before you pump fuel" policy due to a high number of drive-offs. Mayor Hawkinson said that it may be a corporate-wide decision, not necessarily based upon an acute situation in our community to which Coughlin and Walton agreed.

Correspondence and Public Notices

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Kalahar, second by Padrnos: to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Attest: 
Dan Coughlin, City Administrator


Mayor Hawkinson