

Owatonna City Council Minutes

February 6, 2024

On Tuesday, February 6, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., Council President Schultz called the regular session of the Owatonna City Council to order in the Chambers of the Charles S. Crandall Center. Present were Council Members Raney, Svenby, Voss, Dotson, Burbank, Boeke, and Schultz; Mayor Kuntz; Public Works Director Murphy; Parks, Recreation & Facilities Director Tuma; Fire Chief Hoffman; Human Resource Director Thamert; IT System Administrator Sticken; City Attorney Walbran; City Administrator Busse and Administrative Coordinator Clawson.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Council President Schultz welcomed everyone. Council Member Boeke made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, Council Member Burbank seconded the motion; all members voted aye in approval.

Consent Agenda Items

Council President Schultz explained council members review the Consent Agenda items prior to the meeting for approval in one motion. Consent Agenda items for this meeting include:

- Minutes – Council Meeting – January 16, 2024
- Minutes – EDA Meeting - November 15, 2023
- Minutes - EDA Meeting – December 20, 2023
- Minutes – HRA Meeting – November 27, 2023
- Minutes – Planning Commission Meeting – November 14, 2023
- Minutes – Planning Commission Meeting – December 20, 2023
- Minutes – Planning Commission Meeting – January 9, 2024
- Fire - Monthly Dashboard and Activity Report - December 2023
- Building Inspections Monthly Report - January 2024
- Police - Monthly Crime Clock and Crime Statistics
- Exempt Permit - MN Pheasants Inc - March 9, 2024
- Event Permit – 2024 Pride in the Park – July 13, 2024
- Marketing Services Agreement - Golf Now

Golf Now is a software, marketing, and technology software company with a national database which offers tee-time bookings for 11,000+ courses worldwide. Golfers can search the Golf Now database and reserve tee times online, based on search criteria such as location, price, and availability. This agreement is effective for 1 year and auto-renews for 1 year, until written notice is provided at least 30 days before the agreement term.

Maintenance Agreement - Club Car

This is an annual maintenance service agreement for regular monthly cart service which includes maintaining proper: tire pressure, fluid levels, lubrication, batteries and inspection of brakes and drive systems. Service is performed monthly from May to the end of October with a per-cart cost of \$25 on gas carts and \$20 on electric carts for a total of \$975 per month. The initial term of

the maintenance agreement is for the 2024 Brooktree season and will automatically renew annually over the duration of the lease agreement unless the City provides a 30-day cancelation notice.

2024 Instrumentation and Control Support Services Agreement - AE2S

An agreement for Instrumentation and Control (I&C) Support Services at the Wastewater Treatment Facility. Cost will not exceed \$10,000 without prior authorization.

Renew HR/Payroll Software Contract – UKG

The current contract will expire in April 2024, this software has proven to be beneficial in the areas of time management, reporting, open enrollment, and benefit management. This renewal agreement is a three-year term with guaranteed increases of 11%, 0% and 0%.

Bonding Agreements – Minnesota Public Facilities Authority

The Minnesota Public Facilities Authority (PFA) approved project financing for the City of Owatonna on January 2, 2024. The Project consists of wastewater plant rehabilitation and treatment upgrades to reduce phosphorus discharge to the Cannon River Watershed. PFA's financing is SPAP 2023 Owatonna WW – General Fund \$11,000,000 and SPAP 2023 Owatonna Water Treatment – G.O. Bond Proceeds \$11,000,000. The City was previously awarded a \$7 million Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) and \$1 million Clean Water SRF Principal Forgiveness Grant. This brings total outside funding sources to \$30 million.

Set Date for 2024 Local Board of Appeal & Equalization Meeting – April 16, 2024

Statement of Work & Scope of Services – Gallagher

Gallagher will provide ongoing job evaluations and development of job descriptions in 2024. These ongoing services will be utilized in administering and maintaining employee compensation in alignment with the Compensation Plan.

Council Member Svenby made a motion to approve these Consent Agenda items, Council Member Dotson seconded the motion. Council Member Voss thanked City Administrator Busse, Mayor Kuntz, Public Works Director Murphy, and staff for lobbying to obtain MPCA Grants for the WWTP Project. The current cost estimate for the project is \$65 million with \$30 million received in grants. With no additional comments, all members voting aye for approval.

Finance Report

Council Member Raney recapped payments made for amounts greater than \$20,000 during this period. The total amount of bills presented was \$837,455.81, Council Member Svenby made a motion to approve payment of all bills presented, Council Member Voss seconded the motion, all members voted aye in approval.

Resolution 9-24 Approve Report and Set Public Hearing Date – 2024 Street & Utility Project

Public Works Director Murphy requested approval of Resolution 9-24 to accept the Feasibility Report and set a date for a public hearing to consider the 2024 Street and Utility Project. This project will involve various levels of needed reconstruction work on the following streets:

- McKinley Street SW - Linn Avenue SW to Lilac Avenue
- Anderson Place S

The public hearing will be held on Wednesday, March 6th at 7:00 p.m. in Chambers at the Charles S. Crandall Center. A neighborhood Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 27th from 5:00-5:30 p.m. for an informal discussion about this proposed project. Council Member Raney made a motion for approval, Council Member Boeke seconded the motion, all members voted aye for approval.

Resolution 10-24: Appoint Election Judges – 2024 Presidential Nominating Primary Election – March 5, 2024

City Administrator Busse requested appointment of Election Judges for the 2024 Presidential Nominating Primary (PNP) Election. Election Day will be Tuesday, March 5th with the Polls open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm. Judges appointed have attended training and are certified to serve as an Election Judge. They are paid \$13 per hour and Head Judges earn \$14 per hour. Election Judges are also paid to attend training and, when serving as Health Care Facility Judges to take requested ballots to residents in the healthcare facilities. City Administration staff may assign additional or substitute Election Judges as necessary for this Special PNP Election. Council Member Boeke made a motion to approve Resolution 10-24, Council Member Dotson seconded the motion, all members voted aye in approval.

Change Order #10 – Wastewater Treatment Facility Expansion Project

Public Works Director Murphy presented Change Order #10 from Rice Lake Construction for the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Expansion Project. Work Change Order 10 consists of Work Change Directives (WCD) 61-64 & 66-69 and are as follows:

- 61 - Casework Material Change in the Admin Building
- 62 - Roof Drain Routing Insulation
- 63 - Private Hydrant Replacement
- 64 - MBR Lab Vacuum Pump
- 66 - MBR Masonry at Mech Room
- 67 - STB Roof Insulation DDepth Change
- 68 - Exterior Door Changes
- 69 - Additional Light Switched in MBR Cassette Room

Work Change Directives (WCDs) are created as a means to address construction issues, design clarifications, interdisciplinary coordination, or errors and/or omissions.

The project price increase is \$191,149.45; the adjusted contract total due to change orders 1 through 10 is \$56,686,268.09. Council Member Raney made a motion for approval, Council Member Boeke seconded the motion, all members voted aye in approval.

STAFF COMMENTS

Fire Chief Hoffman reviewed the Fire Department's December 2023 Monthly Dashboard and Activity Report in the Consent Agenda which compares the 2023 year-end-totals to those of 2022. Last year, there were more inspections completed for licensing requirements. The number of emergency calls was lower but has remained steady, we do not do medical first response as some cities do. More training hours were logged in 2023; full-time staff receive training weekly to confirm skills and certifications were completed for compliance rescues. Several firefighters are taking the certification test tonight for the Fire I Instructor Class; we should have eight new instructors on staff. During 2023, we completed confined space training and this year we plan to offer trench training, this will be an expensive training, so we have invited other entities to participate to reduce our costs. He has been involved with a group of Fire Chiefs regulating the new Fire Department course offered at the Owatonna High School. Most of the classes are offered on-line, students will receive college credit hours from Riverland Community College for completing these classes which is the same classes our new firefighters are required to take. Students completing the course are eligible at age 18 to take the state certification to become a Firefighter I.

Park and Recreation and Facilities Director Tuma commented four of six activities planned for the Annual Bold and Cold Event last weekend were canceled because of the weather, it has been warm and there is no snow- or ice-covered areas. The Luminary Walk and an Open Swim session with water swim and other activities were held. The Spring/Summer Activity Guide will be available within a few days for registration to begin on February 20th, volunteer coaches will be needed. In 2019, the City approved a resolution naming the city as a Pollinator City to support pollination best practices. Some of the good practice steps taken include placing pellets in swampy areas for mosquito control which reduced blanket spraying from three times a year to just one. Staff attended training to learn which herbicides are best to not hurt the pollinator plants, we are not mowing as much at the golf course and have expanded some rain gardens.

Public Works Director Murphy commented three positions have been filled: Aiden Stowe, Engineering Tech II will begin next week part-time until his college graduation in May; Reagan Anderson, Streets Senior Maintenance Worker and Aaron Boss, Equipment, Equipment Maintenance Technician Specialist began last week.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Theresa Harsma, 619 Truman, member of Bee Friendly Alliance of Steele County commented their organization promotes planting pollinator friendly plants. She was glad to hear the city has taken steps to reduce the number of times spraying each year and

training staff to be pollinator friendly. On Saturday, they held a workshop with Master Gardener Dustin Zimmer presenting information on how to start a rain garden. Several participants submitted postcards with comments for City Council consideration:

Elaine Dornquist – Please stop spraying chemicals around our yards in Owatonna.

Theresa Harsma – Stop spraying mosquitos which are harmful to bees, butterflies, caterpillars, (which are eaten by birds), fish and people! Use pellets in our retention ponds instead. Thank you.

Kathy Grive – I would like to encourage the City of Owatonna to use an alternative to spraying for mosquito control.

Roger Wacek, 646 E Vine Street commented he was surprised the city sprayed for mosquitoes last year, he spent many evenings outdoors and observed very few mosquitoes. He attended the Bee Friendly meeting on Saturday and heard several concerns that unnecessary mosquito spraying was killing pollinators. He has made similar requests to the city over the last ten years. In 2018, costs incurred for herbicides, fertilizers and fungicides exceeded \$73,000; this type of expenditure should be eliminated. Suggestions for our Pollinator Friendly City include:

- 1) Rain Gardens and Storm Water Retention Ponds should be called Pollinator Rain Gardens.
- 2) Adopt an environmentally friendly vegetation management and pest control policy.
- 3) Offer a Community Education Class for Pollinator Rain Gardens.
- 4) Offer an annual Community Education Class for maintenance of Pollinator Rain Gardens.

With Stormwater Retention Pond(s) at the library, the schools, and all around the City, we have a lot of opportunities for Pollinator Rain Gardens. The biggest roadblock is many will view the departure from turfgrass lawns looks messy and you will get the calls about long grasses.

Matt Sennett, 2519 Stoney Creek Drive commented he and four hundred other residents have signed a petition opposing use of 29th Street as the east-side corridor. The proposed route is next to approximately 150 homes, and they believe use of 34th Street would be a better choice. The type of road proposed is similar to the road in front of Walmart, I met with the City Engineer in front of Walmart during rush hour and the noise was terrible and yet you are considering putting a similar road next to our homes. There is a road study in process to determine what the best route will be; the Lead Engineer on this project is saying the obvious choice is 29th Street. We believe there is a lot of bias in his choice and in this study with which we are not comfortable. The reason we are so adamantly opposed to this is the safety for the kids in our neighborhood; my swing set is within one hundred feet of the proposed road. My neighbor's homes are very close to the proposed road. The project plan is 30 years old, and I understand it might not be easy, but use of 34th Avenue, just half a mile down the road would be the

right thing to do, it is set up for this type of project. It is important for you to serve the citizens of this community, to do what is pleasing for our citizens and Owatonna.

Melissa Zimmerman, 225 Stoney Creek Drive commented that before deciding which projects to invest in, the city asked for citizen input. Citizen's responses indicated their top priority was to improve the condition of current roads and the lowest priority was to reduce congestion and improving power lines. The east side corridor aligns with the lowest priority and of the twenty-six responses for transportation concerns, only two expressed concerns for a north-south route on the east side of town. Elected officials have expressed residents support for this project but recent engagements do not, out of 141 called, only one favored 29th Avenue for this project. There might be isolated support for use of 29th Avenue but of those expressing preferred location, 99% preferred use of 34th Avenue for this project. The overwhelming concern is 29th Avenue is too close to current homes and does not make sense, especially with the intended one hundred' footprint. Many residents frequently expressed frustration from lack of effort from representatives, they felt there has been a lack of information from the city and county. Safety, accessibility, and quality of life are at stake here and demand a more attentive and responsive approach from city officials. It is time for a change, a shift to genuine listening and consideration of constituent desires. Relocating the east side corridor to 34th Avenue is a viable solution offering safety and opportunity for growth.

Gary Jones, 995 Ridge Road said he found six articles posted online by Mayo Clinic regarding deer tree stands. Every year 3,000-4,000 hunters are injured in deer tree stand falls. Eighty-two percent of hunters who fall from a tree stand are not wearing a full body harness. The average fall from a tree stand is fifteen feet and injuries suffered often include paralysis or death. There is a deer stand safety video prepared by Mayo Clinic which can be watched online, they are trying to say, these things are dangerous. We have tree stands in our parks, they are open 24-7 and kids pass by and see them as an adventure. A \$20 permit fee allows a tree stand to stay out there several weeks. You do not want to turn your backs on this potential danger, we should use drones as done in the metro areas cities to identify where the deer are and then limit it to a two-week period and only within the parks where the deer are. Close those parks to everyone with the exception of the bow hunters and then return the parks to the taxpayers after the two-week period. Tonight, your names are shown on a plaque for renovation to this chamber and you should be immensely proud of this, but you do not want to get your names on something because you sponsored a dangerous activity.

Susan Mullenbach, 2535 Mossy Creek, my husband and I have lived in our home for 18 years. Our property would abut up to 29th Avenue, the planned location for the east-

side corridor. We are firmly against this location as it would negatively impact our lives and our property.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Council Member Raney commented that one thing asked of City Administrator Busse was that when Council Meetings returned to Council Chambers, there would be more of a Department Directors presence during our Council Meetings. Tonight, there are four Department Directors present; thank you for coming. It is important to give residents updates on what is happening in your departments so appreciate that you are here.

Council President Schultz commented it was nice to see the participation during tonight's meeting.

At 7:44 p.m., Council Member Boeke made a motion to adjourn, Council Member Dotson seconded the motion and with no objection heard, the meeting ended.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Clawson, Administrative Coordinator