

## *Minutes are unofficial until approved at the next council meeting*

### **MINUTES OF THE ALDEN CITY COUNCIL MEETING – November 13, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Alden City Council was called to order at 6:00pm. Roll call was read. Members present were Ms. VanEngelenburg, Mr. Reindal, Mr. Wichmann, Ms. Pederson, and Mayor Reyerson. City staff present were City Clerk-Treasurer Knutson, Public Works Superintendent Wuerflein, Maintenance Worker Burris, Chief of Police Glen Strom, and Fire Chief Thunstedt. Others present were Don Savelkoul, Christopher Cannistraci, Maria Bernal and her granddaughter, Scott Soika, and Scott Soika Jr.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2024, meeting as presented. Carried.

Motion by Wichmann and seconded by Reindal to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Carried.

Motion by Reindal and seconded by VanEngelenburg to approve the Hours report as presented. Carried.

Fire Chief Thunstedt reported that there was 1 vehicle fire call, 1 mutual aid grass fire, and 4 medical calls in the month of October. The county meeting was held in Clarks Grove, and he was unable to attend. Not much business was done at the meeting due to low attendance. 6 firefighters participated in fire safety education at the school. 15 firefighters attended the funeral services for retired firefighter Scott Hemmingsen. The Alden Fire Department received a \$10,000 grant from the Taylor Family Farms Foundation to be used for a LUCAS CPR machine. Jim will make sure all requirements are met for receiving this grant. The department will need to raise the rest of the money for the machine. The training allotment for the department next year will be \$5830, or about \$265 per member. There has been no more word on the upcoming OSHA mandates. Thank you to the Alden Legion for the donation of \$200 to the Fire Relief Association. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to approve the fire report as presented. Carried.

Public Works Superintendent Wuerflein reported that the new Christmas decorations have been received but have not been unpacked yet. They are trying to get all the light bulbs in the garland to match the snowflakes, and then hoping to put them up the week of the 18th. The signs went up for the city lots for sale. There have been several inquiries already. Jerome would like to have his last day set as Friday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>. He requests that the council waive the vacation carryover policy and allow him to carry all of his remaining vacation over, to be paid out upon his last day. January 3<sup>rd</sup> date will allow him to file the December report before he is done. Motion by Wichmann and seconded by Pedersen to approve Jerome's final day as January 3, 2025, and allow him to carry over all his remaining vacation. Carried. There have been questions from the public regarding all the lead service line letters sent out. The city's water source has been tested and there is no lead, so the issue with elevated lead has to do with the plumbing in the homes. Information has been shared, and homeowners can have their water tested at their own expense if there is a concern. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Pedersen to approve the Public Works Report.

Chief Strom reported that he had 20 different calls for service in the last month. He has applied for a grant through the Alden Area Community Foundation to help pay for emergency response equipment. He is still waiting for 3 major pieces of equipment to arrive, and those have already been budgeted for. He attended the South Central Drug Investigation Unit meeting, and presented a new Joint Powers Agreement to the council. They have waived our membership fee for 2024, since it is so close to the end of the year. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by VanEngelenburg to become a member of the South

Central Drug Investigation Unit. Carried. We have heard several good comments about having an officer back in town.

The Lions project to update the Welcome to Alden signs has been put on hold. They did not receive the Small Town grant, so they will be applying to the Carlson Foundation in the spring. They also asked if the city would consider helping pay for the project. The council did not have a problem with it, but the amount the city pays should be discussed with the Lions. This project, and updating around the big rock memorial on the east side of the lake will be discussed in the spring.

The election results report was reviewed by the council. Jerry Reyerson received the most votes for mayor. Janelle VanEngelenburg received the most votes for council member, and the second council member seat will go to Jeff Wichmann, who had the most write in votes with 12. Motion by Wichmann and seconded by Pedersen to pass Resolution 2024-11 – a resolution to certify results of the Tuesday, November 5, 2024 General Election. Carried.

The council discussed certifying delinquent utilities to property taxes. There are 4 accounts that have more than the current quarter past due, and these would be the accounts that would be certified to property taxes. The property owners have until November 22 to make payments to pay in full or decrease the amount that is put onto their property taxes. Nobody was present to contest the certification. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Pedersen to pass Resolution 2024-12 – A resolution directing delinquent utility charges be placed on the 2025 property tax rolls. Carried.

The council discussed certifying past due nuisance abatement charges to property taxes. There were 2 properties in question. There is confusion regarding one of the properties, as it is in a contract for deed situation and the seller of the property did not receive notice of the abatement charges. The council will table the certification for 324 W. Main Street for this year. The owner of the other property was present, and said he had no intention to pay the charges. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by Wichmann to pass Resolution 2024-13 – A Resolution Directing past due charges for nuisance abatement be placed on the 2025 property tax rolls, removing 324 W. Main St. from Exhibit A for this year so there will be time to give proper notice to the seller in the Contract for Deed. Carried.

Discussion was had on raising the sewer rates for 2025. The usage rate will be increased by \$2.00 per 1000 gallons to support the future infrastructure project. Water rates will remain the same in 2025. Motion by Pedersen and VanEngelenburg to pass Resolution 2024-10 – Resolution to Increase 2025 Sewer Rates. Carried.

The quote for the doors for the beach house were discussed. The issue will be tabled until spring.

There have been several inquiries about the city owned properties for sale since the signs went up. Kim provided the covenants to those who inquired about the lots on Powers and Emerson and told them to come to a council meeting if they had questions. Nobody was present this month to ask questions of the council. We did receive an offer from Kim Soost to purchase the property next to hers for \$1000. The property is 350 Euclid Street, Parcel ID #21.007.0110. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by VanEngelenburg to sell the property to Kim Soost for \$1000, and the buyer will pay all closing fees. Carried.

Maria Bernal was present to discuss her son's property at 326 Euclid. Michael has given her a notarized letter saying she has his approval to do what she needs to with the property to get it into compliance, but the city's attorney will need him to give her legal Power of Attorney to proceed. The council reviewed Resolution 2024-14 – Order to Raze a Hazardous Building, along with Exhibit A – Hazardous structure checklist and pictures of the house on the property. The resolution sets out the steps that need to be taken to either bring the house into compliance or tear it down. We will need Michael's address to serve the resolution in person, and we will need to have a public hearing regarding the resolution. The letter will be served to Michael, and we will have the public hearing at next month's council meeting.

The owner of 171 N. Powers was present to discuss the issues on his property. He explained the situation as to why the vehicles are there. He is working on fixing them and selling them as soon as he can. He asked for some time to get them sold. He stated that the cars will be moved out by May 15<sup>th</sup>, and the city will take action if they are still there after that time. Motion by Wichmann and seconded by VanEngelenburg to allow Mr. Soika until May 15<sup>th</sup> to get the property into compliance. Carried.

Interviews for the Public Works Superintendent position were conducted Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup>. Motion by Reindal and seconded by Wichmann to offer the position to Raymond Riedl. Carried.

After some discussion, we decided to review the covenants to see if there was anything we would like to change.

Alex requested time off. Dates are November 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> (the 28<sup>th</sup> is Thanksgiving) and December 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>. Alex is on call December 25<sup>th</sup> and will do the rounds that day. He will also be available to plow, should he be needed for that during his time off. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve Alex's vacation request with the contingency that he be available to plow if he is needed. Carried.

Pedersen would like to set up another meeting with Stephanie Haedt and the personnel policy committee. Kim will reach out to Stephanie to set that up and let the committee know.

Kim reminded the council that employee reviews should be done by the end of the year. Copies will be handed out to the council.

Motion by Pedersen and seconded by VanEngelenburg to approve the bills and Electronic Fund Transfers as presented. Bills presented for payment \$58,387.10, EFT's of \$6,757.50, and Payroll of \$11,961.27. Carried.

Motion by Wichmann and seconded by Reindal to adjourn at 7:19 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Knutson

Clerk-Treasurer