

MINUTES OF THE ALDEN CITY COUNCIL MEETING – May 8, 2024

The regular meeting of the Alden City council was called to order by Mayor Reyerson at 6:00pm. Roll call was read. Council Members present were Ms. VanEngelenburg, Mr. Reindal, Mr. Wichmann, Ms. Pederson and Mayor Reyerson. City staff present were Fire Chief Thunstedt, Public Works Supervisor Jerome Wuerflein and Clerk-Treasurer Kim Knutson. Others present were Jamie Christiansen, Don Bryson, Kelly Hendrickson and Earl St. Claire.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the minutes of the April 10, 2024, meeting as presented. Carried.

Motion by Wichmann and seconded by VanEngelenburg 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 fire call, 1 mutual aid fire call, and 5 medical calls in April. The county meeting was held in Manchester, with the topic being education. Another member of the State Fire Marshal office was in attendance. Jim attended a proposed OSHA plan update meeting via ZOOM and gave an update on the proposals. The MN DNR 50/50 grant is open, and the deadline is July 1st. Jim will fill out the application, and he is planning to use the grant for more SCBA bottles if received. First responders had medical training on April 17th. The topic was cardiac emergencies and using the LUCAS CPR machine. Jim has received a quote for some extrication tools and will be reaching out to other companies for quotes as well. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the Fire Report as presented. Carried.

Public Works Superintendent Wuerflein reported that he is in the permitting process for the lake outfall repair. The lake water level is high now, so it will have to wait until the water is lower to complete. The new mower works well at the ponds, and they are also using it at the new lots with Alex using the rider to trim. He did get 2 flat tires on the mower, so he bought spares to have on hand. There were 3 water main breaks which are likely tied to flushing the fire hydrants. Jerome bought a hydrant tool with some attachments, which cost around \$2000, to hopefully limit those issues in the future. They also repaired a street valve and a curb stop. They have been locating curb stops throughout town. They have found 373 of them, and there are a few that they were not able to find. The Lead Service Line inventory is has roughly 40% returned. We will do a second mailing once we determine who has yet to respond. Alex is at pond school this week. Motion by Wichmann and seconded by Reindal to approve the Public Works Report as presented. Carried.

Alden-Conger School reached out and would like to provide a service project to the city for their Social and Emotional Health Day on Friday, May 10. We talked about picking up sticks at NorthPark and around town. Many of those areas have already been picked up for mowing, but we will see if there are other projects we need help with. Kim will give them Jerome's contact information to coordinate.

An email was received from McDonald Hopkins regarding the Corporate Transparency Act. This is informational only.

The Albert Lea Police Department will be providing training for Ordinance Enforcement on May 29th at 6:00pm. Jerry and Kim will attend.

We received a letter from SMIF requesting donations. Kim will check into whether or not we are allowed to make a contribution.

Freeborn County Auditor Treasurer, Kelly Hendrickson was in attendance to discuss options for the city to purchase 308 W. Main Street. If the city purchases, we would be purchasing the property "as is". The price would be the cost of the taxes, eviction, and mileage. The city could not resell it for a profit but could sell it for the purchase price plus any expenses to fix and clean up. There was much discussion on the topic, including questions from the previous owner, Mr. St. Claire. After interrupting the meeting several times, Mr. St. Claire was told to address any further questions to the city and/or county attorney. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to purchase the property for the cost of the taxes, plus eviction, and mileage, approximately \$5000. A roll call vote was taken. Those voting yes: VanEngelenburg, Reindal, Wichmann, and Pedersen. Voting no: None. Closing on the property was set for Friday, May 10, at 2:00pm in the Auditor-Treasurer's office. Jerry and Kim will attend.

There was nobody present regarding an update for Morin Lake Days.

Discussion was had on the flowerpots around the lake for this year. A notice will be put in the next Alden Advance asking people to sign up for planters again this year. The volunteers can plant what they wish and will be responsible for maintaining the planters for the year. Pedersen motioned and VanEngelenburg seconded that the city will fund the flowers for the planters this year if purchased from Dave McKean, up to \$75 per planter. The city will also fund the Hanging Baskets next year. Carried.

Discussion was had on the updated Job Descriptions. The updates were received late, so the council did not have time to review prior to the meeting. There were a few items that still need to be updated. The items discussed were spending limits prior to council approval should be \$2000, minimum qualifications on experience should say "preferred" not "required", attending safety training classes. Kim will also check into whether or not the clerk is required to be an ex-officio member of the Firemen's Relief Association. The job descriptions discussion will be continued at the next meeting.

The employee evaluation format was approved at the last council meeting and will move forward. Each council member will complete the evaluations for each employee and turn them in by May 22nd. Jerry will compile and meet with the employees. Further discussion was had on how the evaluations will be used in regard to raises and job expectations.

The covenant for selling city owned residential lots has been updated per last month's discussion. This would be in effect for the lots on both Powers Ave. and Emerson. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by VanEngelenburg to approve the covenant for selling city lots. Carried.

Mayor Reyerson received a recommendation for a candidate interested in the City's police position. This individual would help put together our job description, and would also help with setting up the new department equipment, etc. The position needs to be posted, so we will post it in the Alden Advance, on the bulletin board outside the city office, on the city website, and also on the League of MN Cities for 2 weeks.

There are no further updates on the Mayo Clinic building. Don Bryson mentioned that there may be a covenant with Mayo Clinic and the previous owner Dr. Schmidt when the building was sold. This may be something we can check into.

Discussion was had on the Point-of-Sale Building Inspection Ordinance that is used by the City of Hartland. This ordinance requires inspections to be done prior to selling a property, making sure that houses are in livable condition when they are sold. The City of Alden will move forward with passing this

ordinance at the June meeting, and a notice for a public hearing will be posted 10 days prior to the June council meeting.

An update was given on citizen complaints in process. Discussion was also had on zoning issues. Kim will be sending out letters to the residents with outstanding water bills.

We will be sending the Fire Debris Escrow Funds back to Leah Jacobson, less the 15% administrative fee allowed by statute.

The city received donations from the LeVerne Carlson Foundation. Donations were for the Alden Cemetery, the Alden Fire Department, Morin Lake Days, the Alden Museum, and the Carlston Cemetery. Funds to be distributed to the appropriate groups are included in the bills to approve at tonight's meeting, and will be distributed upon approval.

A resident called the city office asking why the Fire Department is not allowed to fill swimming pools. After a brief discussion, it was decided to bring the issue up to the fire department, as Chief Thunstedt had left the meeting by the time the issue was discussed. We will let them decide if they would be willing to provide the service. If so, we will have to discuss how the water would be billed.

Jerome gave an update on the request from MN DOT asking us to remove the community recognition signs posted on the population signs on Highway 109. We did take down the signs as required, and we will notify the organizations that we have the signs available for them to pick up. The electronic speed limit signs are ok, as they were able to locate the permit that was issued when the signs were installed.

Jerome reached out to Ben from Bolton & Menk regarding the water/sewer project, and Alden is now number 15 on the list for review with Rural Development (RD). They expect to review the application sometime this fall. The financing will be moved into next year's funding or possibly the year after. The council discussed moving forward with the project even with the new numbers. No final decision will be made until we receive actual funding information, but we need to keep in mind other street, water, and sewer repairs needed around town, and if they will be done now or at the time of the project.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the bills and Electronic Fund Transfers as presented. Bills presented for payment \$27,739.08, EFT's of \$8,046.18, and Payroll of \$7,808.23. Carried.

Motion by Wichmann and seconded by Reindal to adjourn at 8:40pm

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Knutson
Clerk-Treasurer