

MINUTES OF THE ALDEN CITY COUNCIL MEETING – June 13, 2024

The public hearing for input regarding ordinance 171.01 Point of Sale Building Inspection was called to order by Mayor Reyerson 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 Public Works Superintendent Wuerflein, Fire Chief Thunstedt, and City Clerk-Treasurer Knutson. Others present were Brian Jacobs, Jamie Christiansen, Don Bryson, Dave McKean, Attorney Austin White, and County Commissioner Nicole Eckstrom.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Mayor Reyerson gave an overview of the purpose of the ordinance, which is to make sure that houses meet the minimum housing standards before transfer of ownership. There was much discussion about the details of the ordinance and how it would work. Changes will be made to the ordinance and presented at the July council meeting. Motion by Wichmann and seconded by VanEngelenburg to close the public hearing at 6:18. Carried.

The regular meeting of the Alden City Council was called to order at 6:18.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to approve the minutes of the May 8, 2024, meeting as presented. Carried.

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

Discussion was had on the hours report and Alex's overtime. He has 54.25 accrued comp time hours. Ms. Pedersen asked if Alex has been taking time off during the day to allow for mosquito spraying the evenings. At this time, with Morin Lake Days coming up, we cannot afford to have him gone. He may take some of that time after this week. Knutson asked if we should pay out the hours over 40 hours, per the personnel policy. He will be paid out the overtime over 40 hours on the next payroll. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the Hours report as presented. Carried.

Public Works Superintendent Wuerflein reported that the Emerald Ash Borer has hit Alden. 6 trees were removed by the lake, and another 12 trees in NorthPark need to come down. VanEngelenburg asked clerk Knutson to check into any grants that may be available to help pay for that. There have been issues with graffiti and vandalism at North Park. Jerome has been discharging the ponds and will continue to do that up until the deadline of June 15th. Jerome and Heath went into the city owned property at 308 W. Main Street, and while there, the previous owner came over. Law Enforcement was called, and they took care of the issue. They did do some re-arranging of the debris on the property to make it look better until we determine what we will do with everything. Discussion was had on the next steps with the property, but nothing has been decided. The Case tractor has been having a code problem, and it is at Arnold's. Jerome recommended we do a formal survey at 308 W. Main Street to find the property pins. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by Reindal to have a survey of 308 W. Main Street done. Carried. Jerome has requested vacation July 12th – 16th, and also the week of October 7. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the vacation request. Carried. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by VanEngelenburg to approve the Public Works Report. Carried. Thank you to everyone who worked hard to clean up around the lake, including the Alden 4H club.

Correspondence was received from the MN State Demographic Center to review and comment on the estimated population and household count for the city. The estimates appear accurate.

Candis Hitchcock was on the agenda but was not able to attend this month's meeting. She has asked to be on the agenda for next month.

K-2 Towers currently leases the communication tower in NorthPark, and they sent a proposal to purchase the lease. Motion by Reindal and seconded by Wichmann to deny the request. Carried.

There was an inquiry from a resident regarding the two city-owned lots on Euclid Street. They were wondering if they may be for sale in the future. The smaller of the lots may be available for sale, but the other one can't be sold by the city due to restrictions put in place at the time the city acquired the property. No action will be taken at this time, but the council will consider if the resident would like to pursue the purchase of the property.

Fire Chief Thunstedt reported that there was 1 false alarm fire call, 1 assistance call related to weather, and 4 medical calls in the month of May. The county meeting was held in Albert Lea, and they discussed and updated weather spotting guidelines. A state fire marshal was at the meeting and reminded the departments to turn in rosters and training invoices before June 30th. A second company selling extrication equipment gave a demonstration for the department. The Alden Fire department voted that they would like to purchase the equipment from Alex Air Apparatus, and all the funds have been raised to cover the cost. Funds will be used from the Special Projects Fund. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by VanEngelenburg to approve the purchase of the equipment from Alex Air. Carried. The department received donations this month from Security Bank to show community support, and they also received a donation in memory of Tom Hughes. New OSHA standards were discussed with the fire marshal representative. There is a comment period open through July 22nd for departments to voice their opinion on the subject. Jim is going to put together information to provide input on our behalf. Discussion was had on the process for severe weather alerts. The Severe Weather siren is controlled by the county, but we are also able to set it off manually here in town if needed. The council has authorized the fire department to set the siren off if there is a need and the county has not set it off. The fire department requested closing Water Street between 9am and 3pm on Sunday, June 16th, for the Fire Department Water Wars. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Pedersen to approve closing Water Street at the requested time. Carried.

City Attorney Austin White was in attendance to go over the process of condemning hazardous properties and to answer questions from the council regarding the general process.

An update was given on the outstanding ordinance violations. We will call for service for 2 of the properties and will send a letter to another one.

Job Descriptions were updated per last month's discussion. Kim checked into the question regarding the City Clerk being an ex-officio member of the Fire Relief Association, and that is not necessary since our Fire Relief Association became part of PERA. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by Wichmann to approve the job descriptions and employee evaluations. Carried.

Dave McKean was present at the meeting to comment on the planters around the lake. He liked the way that they turned out this year. The council agreed that they looked nice and would like to thank the volunteers for the planters and the hanging baskets.

County Commissioner Nicole Eckstrom was present to make the City of Alden aware of the changes to the new cannabis laws. She recommends that we draft an ordinance putting in place a moratorium regarding the sale of Cannabis. This would allow us time to decide if and how we would like to regulate the industry in terms of location, signage, etc. We had decided to allow the county ordinance regarding cannabis use to cover the City of Alden, but that will not work for cannabis sale. If we want to regulate

sales, we need to pass our own ordinance. We will use the ordinance proposed by the county as a guide to draft our moratorium.

Discussion was had on the police position. The council will review the draft copy of a job description and ad before the next council meeting. Jerry spoke with a member of the Sheriff's department, and they have vehicles that they will be retiring that we may be able purchase.

The Fire Department will be holding their Pork Chop Feed on August 17th.

There was a report that an electrical outlet in city hall is loose and needs to be looked at. There was also a report that the large coffee pots in the hall were not working. We will check into these issues. Brian Jacobs will check into whether SEMCAC still owns anything left in City Hall since Senior Dining is no longer held there.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve a permit for fireworks, the street dance, and allow the closing of Water Street and the alley by the beach for Morin Lake Days. Carried.

Discussion was had on the city purchasing a mosquito sprayer, as we have borrowed Freeborn's sprayer a couple of times this year. We will wait until next month to see if we are happy with the results.

A draft copy of the audit was sent to the council late Tuesday afternoon. The auditor was trying to make it to this month's meeting but was not quite ready. He plans to present the audit at the July meeting.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the bills and Electronic Fund Transfers as presented. Bills presented for payment \$28,877.12, EFT's of \$4,193.64, and Payroll of \$7,798.23. Carried.

Motion by Wichmann and seconded by Reindal to adjourn at 8:07pm

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Knutson
Clerk-Treasurer