

MINUTES OF THE ALDEN CITY COUNCIL MEETING – September 11, 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, Ms. Pederson, and Mayor Reyerson. Absent was Mr. Wichmann. City Staff present were Public Works Superintendent Wuerflein, Fire Chief Thunstedt, City Clerk-Treasurer Knutson, Maintenance Worker Burris, and Chief of Police Glen Strom. Others present were Don Bryson, Jamie Christianson, and Christopher Cannistraci.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said, followed by a moment of silence in memory of the lives lost on 9/11.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2024, meeting as presented. Carried.

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

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

Fire Chief Thunstedt reported that there were 0 fire calls, 6 medical calls, and 1 mutual aid medical call in the month of August. The county meeting was held in Alden this month. 30 people from 11 departments were in attendance. Discussion was had on Mayo ambulance response times, and if there are any ways the department can help shorten the wait time. There was also a presentation from the Albert Lea Fire Department on what the new fire brigade standards will look like if adopted. The Fire Relief Pork Chop supper was a success, serving around 320 meals. The new extrication tools are in service. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Pedersen to attempt to sell the old extrication tools to another department if there is interest. Carried. The AFD was denied the MN DNR grant this year, but Jim is applying for a few other grants for this year as well. Motion by Reindal and seconded by VanEngelenburg to approve the Fire Report as presented. Carried.

Public Works Superintendent Wuerflein reported that the house at 308 W. Main Street has been cleaned out, scrap metal has been cleaned up, and we are waiting for the asbestos testing to be completed. There was a water main leak by the post office which has been repaired. 5 Street repairs have been made where we had water main breaks this year. Bernie Schultz has been cutting trees at NorthPark. MPCA has an application period for grant money for storm water upgrades. The grant is up to \$75,000, and we are looking into applying for that. The white building at the city shop has been rearranged to make room for the squad car. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by VanEngelenburg to sell or dispose of old equipment in the best way possible. Carried. Due to much illegal dumping at the burn site, Jerome would like to purchase 2 trail cams to watch traffic coming in and out of the site. The council agrees with the purchase of the trail cams. We have sent our list of acceptable tree species to Stone Werx to come up with replacement trees for around the lake. Beth Zeller is donating a tree to the city for the area around the lake in memory of her mother. We are looking at November to plant them. There will probably be 3 trees around the lake and 3 at NorthPark. Weeds will be trimmed around the lake. Don Bryson asked the city to clean up a tree from the park that fell on his property, and that will be taken care of with the other trees from NorthPark. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Pedersen to approve the public works report as presented. Carried.

Alden's new Police Chief, Glen Strom, presented the first police report of the new department. He stated that by the end of the week, the City of Alden will have met all the State's requirements to have a police department. Glen has been set up with full access to the County Law Enforcement Center, his State license is in the process of being transferred from the City of Wells to Alden, and he has adopted the required policies for the police department. He has also purchased some equipment and will be taking the

required emergency driving class soon through the City of Blue Earth. The County Board will meet next Tuesday and vote on selling us a squad car fully equipped. We will be able to use the County's software license for the computer and the body camera. He has been reaching out to community businesses and members of the public. We would like to thank the Freeborn County Sheriff's Department, the Wells Police Department, and all the other agencies who have been so helpful in getting things in order for the new department. The Alden Advance will be doing an article on Glen. Chief Strom presented the council with a list of items he will need in the future. The items on the list totaled approximately \$13,000. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by Reindal to approve purchase of all items on the list. Carried. He will also set up a cell phone account for the city. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to approve the Police Report. Carried.

We received a letter from Next Steps Transition – SMEC. Their program teaches students employment and job skills and would like to partner with the city if we have any opportunities for the students to work on a volunteer basis.

County Commissioner Nicole Eckstrom was not able to attend the meeting, but she sent some information to share with the council. The first item is the Freeborn County Sheriff's Department is updating the Hazard Mitigation plan, and they are looking for input from the communities over the next two months. Please reach out to the Emergency Management Director Rich Hall if you have input. The second item is the Small Business Administration has some assistance available to those impacted by the floods in June. The last item she wanted to share was regarding the Small Cities Assistance Program which is money sent by the State to help pay for road repairs. The City of Alden will be receiving \$19,742.00. The city also received a call from an Alden resident who wanted to let the city know that he thought the cemetery looked very nice and was being well taken care of.

The city is moving forward with an order to remove or repair conditions at 326 Euclid. The county building inspector is coming to inspect the property on Friday and will send us a report once that is complete. We will then work with our attorney on the follow-up letters and process. There was also discussion regarding clean-up of miscellaneous items in the yard. We will begin the process to enforce that ordinance, which is separate from the structural issues of the house.

There was discussion regarding the renewal of the Cable Franchise with Midco, which is set to expire February 11, 2025. The council will do more research and discuss it again next month.

After a discussion regarding upcoming changes in our Utility Billing software, there was a motion by Pedersen and seconded by VanEngelenburg to move forward with the change from UBMax to gWorks. Carried.

The city received a request from T & W Towing to help pay for a dumpster that the company required to dispose of property removed from 324 W. Main Street. The owner of the property did not claim it within the 45 day period allowed, so T & W has to dispose of it, and would like the city to help with that cost. Motion by Reindal and seconded by VanEngelenburg to pay for the cost of the dumpster.

Some very rough numbers for the 2025 Budget were put together to present to the council. The Fire Department Budget and the Police Department budgets were turned in and entered, but we will hold a workshop to work on the rest of the numbers. The workshop will be held on Wednesday, September 25th at 6:00pm

After some discussion on the line items for the Levy, the motion was made by Reindal and seconded by VanEngelenburg to set the Preliminary Levy for 2025 at \$300,000. Carried.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Pedersen to approve Resolution 2024.08 Establishing an Urban & Rural Service District, keeping the rate the same as the original ordinance. Carried.

The Truth in Taxation meeting is set for December 11th at 6:00 pm. This is the same evening as our regular council meeting, so the Truth in Taxation meeting will be held at the beginning of that meeting.

Discussion was had on posting the ad for the Public Works Superintendent position. A draft of an ad was presented for approval. Applications will be accepted through September 30th. The ad will be posted as soon as possible in the Alden Advance, the Albert Lea Tribune, The Freeborn County Shopper, and the South-Central News, as well as on the city website.

Discussion was had on the call out system discussed at the last council meeting. Kim is checking into whether or not the new system with gWorks will have the capabilities that we need. If not, she will continue checking into systems.

VanEngelenburg stated that in the future, the Employee Evaluations need to have some sort of documentation for the employee files as to what the total score was and have the employee sign them to verify that the evaluation was discussed with them.

Pedersen presented a quote for new Christmas Decorations throughout the city. The quote was for 20 snowflakes decorations for the light poles, and a tree to be set up in the triangle. The bulbs will be warm white bulbs. Jerome will drive to Becker to pick up the snowflakes, which will save the city \$1250 in freight charges. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by VanEngelenburg to purchase the new holiday decorations for \$22,000. Carried. There was also discussion regarding replacing the Welcome to Alden banners, but more research will be done on that.

Don Bryson asked whether there had been any more discussion on the business proposal from the last council meeting that would like to build by the lake. There is still nothing finalized, and it is our understanding that the business is still looking into property options.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to approve the bills and Electronic Fund Transfers as presented. Bills presented for payment \$38,015.50, EFT's of \$9,604.79, and Payroll of \$11,527.68. Carried.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to adjourn at 7:21 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Knutson
Clerk-Treasurer