

MINUTES OF THE ALDEN CITY COUNCIL MEETING – November 8, 2023.

The regular meeting of the Alden City council was called to order by Mayor Reyerson at 6:00pm and roll call was read. Council Members present were Ms. VanEngelenburg, Mr. Reindal, Mr. Wichmann, Ms. Pederson, and Mayor Reyerson. Absent: none. City staff present were Jerome Wuerflein, Jim Thunstedt, and Kim Knutson. Others present were Ben Rosal, County Commissioner Nikki Eckstrom, Dean & Terri Zabrocki, Carl Rasmussen, Don Bryson, Jamie Christianson, Bernie Bias, Anthony & Kelly Aitken, and Ebeneazor Howe.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to approve the minutes from the October 11 regular council meeting. Carried. Clerk Knutson noted that the minutes from the September meeting should be updated to reflect a change in the Ordinance number for the Fowl Ordinance. It was previously listed as 91.20, but was changed to 170.01 per advice from the League of MN Cities. All local ordinances should be part of Title 17 so that when the ordinances are updated, we can update Numbers 1 – 15 in one motion, and not have to individually update the local ordinances individually.

Motion by Wichmann and seconded by VanEngelenburg 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 there were 2 fire calls 1 mutual aid fire call, 1 MVA, 1 assistance, and 4 medical calls in October. The county meeting was held in Glenville. Fire Prevention week was October 8 thru 14. Alden & Conger Fire Departments held an educational assembly for elementary students. Thank you to Alex Burris, Cole Grunzke, Parker Hemmingsen, Wyatt Ladwig, Caleb Merkouris, and Tyler Stadheim for volunteering their time to educate the students. The Fire Department was awarded \$2500 from Freeborn-Mower Operation Round Up to be used towards rescue tools. 3 AFD members have renewed their EMR certification, we currently have 12 first responders, and 3 more will be taking training starting in January. The Alden Fire Department will hold the annual banquet on November 14th, and Council members and city employees are invited to attend. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the fire report. Carried.

Superintendent Wuerflein reported that after a rough beginning, the city-wide clean-up day was a success. The dumpsters arrived late, but participation was good. The cleaning and televising of the sewer system in the fields is now complete. There were no surprises there. Jerome and Kim met with the insurance adjuster regarding the claim at 205 S. Broadway Ave. We gave her a copy of the video of the storm sewer line, and she did meet with the resident as well. There has been talk about a potential home being built in the near future behind the houses on the north side of Hemmingsen Ave. This would require putting in a street to the property. We will send a letter to the resident trying to get clarification. It would be good to incorporate it into our infrastructure project if needed. We have had requests from people to plant memorial trees at the cemetery. We have put together a list of the species of tree that would be allowed. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by Reindal to approve the eligible list of trees. Carried. We will add this as a policy for the Cemetery. Discussion was had regarding several dangerous properties in town. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to proceed with sending a letter to the owner of the property formerly known as the Creamery to request that the building be removed. Carried. Discussion was had on the Point-of-Sale Ordinance that was proposed a few months ago. The committee will start to work on the ordinance updates, including the Point of Sale Ordinance. Discussion was had on the grass seeding of 5 lots on North Powers Ave. The quote received was over \$2300. It was decided to

just buy grass seed in the spring and spread ourselves, because anyone purchasing the properties and building will be digging it up again. It was also discussed that employees will not be expected to answer questions about city business when they are on their own time away from work. Motion by Wichmann and seconded by Reindal to approve the Public Works report as presented. Carried.

A representative from WCTA stopped into the office to discuss switching the City's internet provider to them. Kim will reach out to get a price comparison and check into the grant application for the Fire Department.

Dean Zabrocki addressed the council regarding property behind his house that is classified as an alley. The property has been unused as an alley, and he has been storing some items back there. He would like to see the alley vacated/abandoned. Other neighbors joined the discussion. Motion by Wichmann and seconded by VanEngelenburg to pursue vacating the alley. Carried.

A time was available for residents to address the council regarding delinquent water bills. One resident addressed the council regarding a hardship but stated that she understands that we need to proceed with the certification. She just wanted to explain the issue. Those accounts that have more than one quarter outstanding will be certified to taxes. Motion by Wichmann and seconded by VanEngelenburg to certify delinquent utility bills to property taxes. Carried.

Ebenezer Howe addressed the council as the past president of the Lions club. He asked for the city to allow Alex time off to attend a Lion's club training in March, if Alex chooses to attend. He also asked if we would waive the rental fee for the Lions club to use City Hall for community events such as the upcoming visit from Santa the Saturday after Thanksgiving. He also asked about possibly restocking the lake with fish. It was determined that we would either have to either keep the weeds down or have fish, that we can't easily do both.

Don Bryson recommended that we make a public disclosure when we sell the lots on North Powers regarding the asphalt in the soil. Check with the MPCA to see what steps we need to take regarding the asphalt.

Bernie Bias addressed the council regarding the infrastructure research that was done in his field. When the city has someone doing some work or sampling in the field within our easement, we need to have the contractor drive in the same tracks out and back, not driving around the entire field.

Ben Rosal from Bolton-Menk gave an update on the project. There was a meeting on October 25th with the committee to discuss the scope of the project. He also updated the city on the potential funding sources. We are now waiting for the RD application to be approved, which will more than likely not be until at least next summer.

Motion by Reindal and seconded by VanEngelenburg to pass Resolution Pursuing the 2023 LRIP Program Funding through Boldon Menk. Carried.

Discussion was had on increasing water and sewer rates for next year. We will finalize the rates in December. Ultimately, we need to have the sewer rates and water rates the same.

The polling place for the City of Alden will remain the same as in the past, City Hall, 174 N. Broadway Ave, Alden.

Discussion was had regarding the Identity Theft Protection provided by the city for those affected by the Date Breach. Motion by Wichmann and seconded by VanEngelenburg to extend the protection for another year at a rate of \$250.00 for the year, which covers all the employees who enrolled at the time of the breach.

Ms. Pedersen brought a plan for landscaping around the memorial rock by the lake. There is also a plan for some landscaping behind the museum. The museum is taking care of the project, and the final design will need minimal maintenance. We will notify the Boy Scouts of the plan, since they are the ones who provided these projects for the city.

The lots that the city purchased on North Powers will need to be rezoned. They are currently zoned as Rural Residential and Agriculture District. They should be rezoned to be Residential R-1 or R-2. We will begin that process of notifying the people of the rezoning and will hold a public hearing for the rezoning. Motion by Wichmann and seconded by VanEngelenburg to rezone the properties to R-1. Carried.

Addition to Agenda was discussion regarding the complaints about dogs running loose around town. We have had multiple complaints, and the sheriff was contacted in one instance. We will continue to work with the Albert Lea Police Department and the Freeborn County Sheriff's office on these issues. We will look into the process of issuing administrative citations for issues like this.

The County Board passed an ordinance regarding public use of cannabis. The county ordinance covers the entire county unless the city has their own ordinance. We will check with our attorney to see if we need to officially adopt the county ordinance, or if we just stay silent on it and that would be our ordinance. Will also check into whether we need to post anything. We will need to let the county board know what we are thinking about the sales part of the law, as the county board will be working on that part next.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the bills presented for payment of \$77,992.78, EFT's of \$6,755.11, and Payroll of \$9,088.71. Carried.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to adjourn at 8:16pm

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Knutson
Clerk-Treasurer