

MINUTES OF THE ALDEN CITY COUNCIL MEETING – December 13, 2023.

The 2023 Truth in Taxation 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, and Kim Knutson. Others present were Carl Rasmussen and Bob Newman.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

There were no members of the public present with any concerns regarding their property taxes. Mayor Reyerson explained to those present that the city did not raise its levy this year. There were printed summaries of the 2024 Budget available for public review. After calling for questions a total of 3 times, Wichmann motioned and VanEngelenburg seconded to suspend the meeting at 6:15, and time for any other people to arrive with questions was allowed. No more members of the public arrived during the waiting period, so at 6:30 the Truth in Taxation meeting was adjourned.

During the pause in the Truth in Taxation meeting, Deb Pedersen presented the city with a framed picture of the old city hall on behalf of the Alden Museum. The picture had been part of the collection at the museum. The city would like to thank the Alden Museum for this kind gift.

At 6:30, Mayor Reyerson called the regular meeting of the City Council to order. The same members were present, with the addition of Fire Chief Thunstedt, who joined prior to the start of the regular meeting.

Motion by Reindal and seconded by VanEngelenburg to approve the minutes from the November 8 regular council meeting. Carried.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Carried. Ms. Pedersen asked if in the future the summary page of the Treasurer's Report could be eliminated. The information from the summary page is redundant, as it is also presented on the second page, along with comparison to the previous month's balances. All agreed this would be fine.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the Hours Report as presented. Carried. Also presented was a request for vacation from Alex Burris. He would like to take vacation the week of Dec 26 – Dec 29. He will be back on call Dec 30 – 31. He will also be available if needed for snow plowing. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve Alex's vacation request. Carried.

Fire Chief Thunstedt reported there were 2 fire calls, 1 mutual aid fire call, and 3 medical calls in November. The county meeting was held in Hartland. A physical map was given to dispatch for auto-aid paging. We are waiting for feedback from them. There has been an issue with excessive wear on the new Turnout Gear, which has been brought to the attention of the vendor. The vendor will fix the issue at no cost to the Fire Department, since the gear is new. The city will be receiving additional one time public safety aid that was allotted from the state budget surplus. Alden's share will be \$25,162.00, and the Fire Department would like to use it for purchasing either new Extrication tools or possibly a Lucas machine, which aids in CPR. The board of Education and Training is allowing \$220 per firefighter in 2024 for training reimbursement. The fire department would like to use the Compeer Grant to purchase a new hose. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to move forward with purchasing the new hose. Carried. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to approve the Fire Report as presented. Carried.

Superintendent Wuerflein reported that there was a water main break repaired on Euclid Ave last month. There was also a repair made to the water tower standpipe. There was an 18-inch bow in the pipe which was corrected. There were issues with the furnace in the Beach House, and a new thermostat was installed. An emergency water shut off was done at 356 S. Broadway. There have been issues with the Christmas decorations this year, and he recommended possibly replacing some of them. VanEngelenburg and Pedersen will investigate new decoration for next year. We have received the New Federal Lead and Copper Rule, and it sounds like all lead pipe will need to be replaced within the next 10 years. We should be fine if the infrastructure project moves forward. The payloader and the Case tractor are both in for repairs. The LRIP grant application was submitted last week. Ms. VanEngelenburg stated that Jerome and Alex did a great job up at NorthPark cleaning up trees and brush. Jerome asked if the council would like to restart the program discussed several years ago regarding removing the Cottonwood trees at NorthPark. After some discussion a motion was made by Pedersen and seconded by Wichmann to remove only the problem trees and begin planting trees to replace the Cottonwoods for the future. Carried. Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Reindal to approve the Public Works report as presented. Carried.

The city received a dividend from the League of Minnesota Insurance Trust in the amount of \$959.00.

The Freeborn County Auditor/Treasurer's office reached out to find out if we would like to charge interest on the Delinquent Utility Bills that were assessed to property taxes. We have not charged interest in the past, and the council decided to leave as it, no interest being charged.

Scott Hemmingsen was on the agenda but was not able to attend the meeting this evening. Kim will call him to see if she can answer his questions.

There was much discussion on the City Employee Vacation Policy and how it is interpreted. It was clarified that all employees will receive 1 week vacation after 6 months, and after that vacation will be accrued on January 1st. The wording in the Personnel Policy will be updated to clarify.

The employee job descriptions need to be finalized and sent to the council members before the January meeting. They will schedule reviews and after that time, the employee raises will be considered. The raises would be effective January 1, 2024.

The updated Personnel Policy was tabled until next month.

Motion by Wichmann and seconded by VanEngelenburg to pass Resolution 2023-16 Increasing Water and Sewer Rates:

RESOLUTION 2023-16
RESOLUTION TO INCREASE 2024 WATER AND SEWER RATES
CITY OF ALDEN
FREEBORN COUNTY, MINNESOTA

WHEREAS, the Water Ordinance No. 54.01, of the City of Alden authorizes the City Council to periodically review and adjust the rates for water and sewer usage, and;

WHEREAS, it is necessary to adopt water and sewer service and usage fees to provide appropriate revenue for proposed improvements at the City of Alden Water and Sewage Treatment Facilities, and;

WHEREAS, the fees also cover maintenance and operations, as well as debt and other costs related to the City’s water and sewer treatment facilities;

WHEREAS, the City Council has determined that the water and sewer rates need to be increased to cover increased operating expenses and future upgrades to the systems;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALDEN, MINNESOTA:

1. **The following rates shall be charged to all persons whose property is serviced by or connected with the City water and sewer systems, effective with the first quarter billing cycle of 2024;**
2. **The City of Alden will periodically review water and sewer rates to ensure they are providing appropriate revenue to cover current and future water and sewer operation expenses.**
3. **When determined necessary, the City will approve charge and rate increase until the loan from the Public Facilities Authority is retired.**

	2023 Rates		2024 Rates
Water Usage	\$9.99/1000 gal.	Water Usage	\$10.99/1000 gal.
Water Surcharge	\$27.92	Water Surcharge	\$27.92
Water Testing	\$1.60	Water Testing	\$1.60
Sewer Usage	\$4.50/1000 gal.	Sewer Usage	\$6.50/1000 gal.
Sewer Surcharge	\$9.00	Sewer Surcharge	\$9.00

Adopted by the City Council this 13th day of December, 2023.

Motion by VanEngelenburg and seconded by Wichmann to approve the final levy for 2024

LEVY PURPOSE	LEVY AMOUNT
GENERAL FUND	\$187,524.00
FIRE PROTECTION	\$ 25,000.00
BONDS – 2017	<u>\$ 61,000.00</u>
TOTALS	\$273,524.00

Motion by Reindal and seconded by VanEngelenburg to approve the Final Budget for 2024 as presented.

Discussion was had on filling the Police Position again. The council will begin to explore this possibility. There was money added to the 2024 Budget for it but will need to figure out what the needs are for the city.

Discussion was had about offering health insurance to the employees again. We will do some checking on the options available.

The city’s Work Comp Insurance is set to be renewed. Nonsmoking agreements were turned in by Chief Thunstedt. There is an option for a Regular Premium Option, or a Deductible Option. Motion by Pedersen and seconded by Reindal to stick with the Regular Premium Option.

Discussion was had regarding 356 S. Broadway. The house is scheduled to be demolished next week, but if that does not happen, the council would like to move forward with removing the house using its authority given in MN Statute 65A.50.

Carl Rasmussen addressed the council regarding the discussion from last month's meeting about vacating the alley behind his house. After some discussion with the neighbors, they would like to leave everything as is for now.

Bob Newman asked the council about the Identity Theft protection that the city offered for the last year to past employees. It expired, and the city decided at the November meeting to renew it for another year. Clerk Knutson is in the process of getting that finalized.

Motion by Wichmann and seconded by VanEngelenburg to approve the bills and EFT's as presented. Bills presented for payment \$53,953.69, EFT's of \$6,256.52, and Payroll of \$9,088.71.

Motion by Reindal and seconded by VanEngelenburg to adjourn at 8:05pm

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Knutson
Clerk-Treasurer