

**MINUTES - BENSON CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
CITY HALL
OCTOBER 2, 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mayor Evenson. Members present: Jack Evenson, Chris Carruth, Dan Enderson, Mark Schreck. Members Absent: Nancy Maanum. Also present: Director of Finance Lisa Kent, City Clerk Valerie Alsaker, City Manager Kyle Harris, Police Chief Ian Hodge, CEDA Representatives Hillary Tweed and Laura Mitteness, Assistant City Attorney Stephan Kowal, Public Works Director Dan Gens, Rob Wolfington and Reed Anfinson.

The Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Mayor asked for any additions to the agenda. Harris asked to add information items air quality permit for the power plant and increased generator feasibility study to the agenda. It was moved by Schreck, seconded by Carruth and carried unanimously to approve the amended agenda.

It was moved by Carruth, seconded by Schreck and carried unanimously to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

- September 18, 2023 City Council Meeting
- August 21, 2023 EDA Meeting
- Charter Communication's Channel Changes
- City Infill Lot Program Update
- Pay Request - Bolton & Menk – Airport Master Plan Update - \$5,400.00
- Pay Request - Magney Construction, Inc. – Clearwell - \$104,018.23
- Electronic Transfers:
 - Journal Entries: August 2023 - \$2,632,115.90
 - Payroll: September 21, 2023 - \$100,699.22

Mayor Evenson asked for anyone with unscheduled business, to which there was no one.

Wolfington approached the Council to update them on the two transmission line projects. First, he discussed the 345 KV transmission line. This will be running from Big Stone to Benson to Alexandria. There is an open house for the public on October 17, 2023 at the Benson Golf Club starting at 3:00 p.m. This is a joint project between Ottertail Power, MRES and Xcel Energy. The western leg of the line is still being studied. Once it hits Alexandria, it will follow the existing path along freeway 94 East. This is expected to take six years to complete.

The next project is the 115KV powerline we have been discussing for 2 years now. This route is from Appleton to Benson. This will bring a second source of power to town, and is a result of the loss of Fibrominn. This open house will be held at McKinney's on November 2, 2023 11:00-1:00, and 4:00-6:00 p.m. Parties involved are Ottertail Power, Great River Energy, MRES, Agralite Cooperative and Benson Electric Utility. This line will come into Benson at the south west corner of town, head north to Pacific Avenue and be double circuited with the existing line on the north side of Pacific Avenue to our substation next to the power plant. The poles will be changed out for bigger poles. This project most likely will cause an expansion at the substation, and changes at the line garage may need to be made. This project timeline is also six years. Wolfington went on to say Council will also need to consider selling the

1.25 mile of transmission line from the Fibrominn site to the substation. This will take the City out of having to comply with NERC standards, which is a heavy lift.

Wolfington went on to discuss the MRES area meeting in Alexandria on October 25, 2023. MRES President and Vice President will be there for a presentation.

Lastly, Wolfington presented the MRES Ambassador Program. MRES is hoping to find an ambassador for each MRES city. He said he was asked if he would be the ambassador for Benson. He said it is an unpaid position, and felt this would be a good position that would offer a conduit for information and continuity, and also be a liaison to the public. After discussion, it was moved by Schreck, seconded by Enderson and carried unanimously to name Wolfington as the MRES Ambassador to the City of Benson.

Harris approached the Council to discuss a property at 702 – 10th St. S. During the sale, it was discovered the cement driveway and part of the garage is encroaching on city right-of-way. He presented a Permit for Use of City Right-of-Way with the current owner, and will transfer to all future owners. City Attorney Wilcox drew up the encroachment agreement. This requires Council review and approval. After discussion, it was moved by Enderson, seconded by Carruth and carried unanimously to approve the Permit for Use of City Right-of-Way as presented.

Gens presented a quote for primary wire. He said this wire is needed to complete the electrical for the Cottage Square development. It was then moved by Carruth, seconded by Schreck and carried unanimously to approve the quote from Stuart C Irby for primary wire in the amount of \$11,726.86.

It was moved by Schreck, seconded by Carruth and carried unanimously to approve the 2024 CGMC Annual Dues in the amount of \$6,617.00 to be paid in 2024.

Chief Hodge approached to discuss the ‘Towards Zero Deaths’ program they enter into each year. This is a grant for enforcement of programs such as seat belt enforcement, speed enforcement, impaired driver enforcement, etc. He will administer the program for Benson Police Department, Swift County Sheriff Department, Appleton and Big Stone Departments as well. The grant award is \$23,000. After discussion, Councilmember Carruth offered the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF AGREEMENT
(RESOLUTION 2022-32)**

Be it resolved that the Benson Police Department enter into a grant agreement with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, for traffic safety enforcement projects during the period from October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024.

The Benson Police Chief is hereby authorized to execute such agreements and amendments as are necessary to implement the project on behalf of the Benson Police Department and to be the fiscal agent and administer the grant.

Councilmember Schreck seconded the foregoing resolution and the following vote was recorded: AYES: Evenson, Schreck, Enderson, Carruth. NAYES: None. Thereupon, the Mayor declared Resolution 2022-32 duly passed and adopted.

Councilmember Enderson offered the following resolution:

**CITY OF BENSON
RESOLUTION ACCEPTING DONATIONS
(RESOLUTION NO. 2023-33)**

WHEREAS, The City of Benson is generally authorized to accept gifts and bequests pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 465.03 and Minnesota Statutes Section 471.17 for the benefit of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the following persons and entities have offered to contribute the cash amounts set forth below to the city:

Janell Welling – Fire donation - \$1,000
Julie Arnold – Beautify Benson T-shirt - \$54
Patrons – Beautify Benson donations - \$42
Coop Credit Union – 2nd Slide donation - \$1,500
Patrons – 2nd Slide donations - \$610
Kristi Anderson – 2nd Slide donations - \$25
Lori Martin – 2nd Slide donations - \$500
Patron – 2nd Slide donations - \$80.50
Tracy Stevens – 2nd Slide donations - \$100
Patrons – 2nd Slide donations - \$17
William Bridgland – 2nd Slide donations - \$100
Patrons – 2nd Slide donations - \$1,575

WHEREAS, all such donations have been contributed to assist the various city departments and programs as allowed by law; and

WHEREAS, The City Council finds that it is appropriate to accept the donations offered.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BENSON, MINNESOTA, AS FOLLOWS:

1. The donations described above are accepted and shall be used to benefit the departments listed above, as allowed by law.

Councilmember Schreck seconded the foregoing resolution and the following vote was recorded: AYES: Evenson, Schreck, Enderson, Carruth. NAYES: None. Thereupon the Mayor declared Resolution 2022-33 duly passed and adopted.

Kent approached the Council. She said the current financial and utility software is archaic. She has been researching software companies and settled on Tyler Technologies. This software is supported by MRES. The program will tie easily into our new metering program as well. This program will allow us to eliminate some current programs and have everything rolled into one program. The software will include financial, utility billing and payroll. There will be no hardware upgrades needed, but possibly the firewall will need some adjustments. She presented the 3-year contract and terms of service to the Council. This was included in the bond we took out earlier this year. After discussion, it was moved by Schreck, seconded by Enderson and carried unanimously to approve entering into a new software agreement with Tyler Technologies as presented.

The Council reviewed the August 2023 budget report.

Harris approached to say he and Alsaker had closed on the house next to the liquor store at 904 Atlantic Avenue last week. He has been reviewing the next steps for that house whether it be by sale or demolition or place it on a City infill lot and sell it together. Enderson questioned the plan for the house and the liquor store. Harris estimates if a new liquor store is built, it will take 2-3 years, and if we do not build one, that lot will be more valuable empty than with a house on it in a non-conforming B-2 district. After discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to have a work session to discuss the house and liquor store plans. The work session was set for Wednesday, October 11, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Next the Mayor moved on to the agenda addition of the renewal of the air quality permit for the power plant. Harris said DGR Engineers have worked with us before on the air permit for the power plant, and the permit is a heavy lift. He said the cost for their assistance will be \$14,800. He went on to discuss MRES incentives for additional generation units in the power plant. He said that he would like to explore the feasibility of what that would look like for the City and cost associated with it. He referenced another city exploring expansion of generation and ran into several unanticipated expenses. He said we could go with a full feasibility study at a cost of \$25,000, but feels a \$3,000 assessment would first tell us whether we would need an additional expense before delving into a full feasibility study. He asked Council to review the information he presented and will bring these items back to the October 16, 2023 City Council meeting for a decision.

There being no further business to come before the Council a motion was made by Schreck seconded by Carruth and carried unanimously to adjourn the Council meeting at 6:23 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk