

**MINUTES - BENSON CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
CITY HALL
AUGUST 5, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mayor Evenson. Members present: Jack Evenson, Nancy Maanum and Gary Landmark, Chris Carruth, Dan Enderson. Members Absent: None. Also present: City Clerk Valerie Alsaker, Director of Finance Lisa Kent, City Manager Kyle Harris, City Attorney Stephen Kowal, Police Chief Ian Hodge, MRES Delegate Rob Wolfington, Sheila Krohse with Bolton and Menk, Public Works Director Elliot Nelson, Liz Auch with Countryside Public Health, Thomas Bouta with the City Water Department, Darrin Lee with the Coalition of Greater MN Cities, Jason Benson with Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services (AE2S), City Engineering Student Addeline DeToy, CEDA Representative Hillary Tweed and Reed Anfinson.

The Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Evenson asked if there were any additions to the agenda, to which there were none. It was moved by Landmark, seconded by Carruth and carried unanimously to approve the agenda.

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

- July 1, 2024 Amended City Council Minutes
- July 15, 2024 City Council Minutes
- May 28, 2024 EDA Minutes
- June 17, 2024 EDA Minutes
- June 3, 2024 Planning Commission Minutes
- Electronic Transfers:
 - Journal entries: June 2024- \$2,823,931.22
 - Payroll: July 11, 2024 - \$137,975.91

There was no one with unscheduled business.

Liz Auch with Countryside Public Health approached the Council to discuss funding as a result of lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies to use toward the battle against opioid addictions. She explained they have received funding and are going to earmark some the dollars toward educating Third Graders. The funds can also be used toward addiction. There is a task force that determine how they can use the money. The Council thanked her for the information.

Darrin Lee with the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC) approached and gave a presentation on the latest legislature activities, what they lobbied for, EMS emergency funding and the bonding bill and why it failed. The Council thanked him for his presentation.

Harris and Benson from AE2S approached with three agreements for Council consideration. The City needs to renew their Wastewater permit and will need the assistance from a firm to help maneuver the permit. AE2S is the firm the City chose. The first contract is a Master Services agreement. This agreement allows the City to engage in smaller projects with them, and sets terms and conditions for the relationship with the City. This is a five-year agreement. After discussion, it was moved by Landmark, seconded by Carruth and carried to approve the master plan agreement with AE2S, and directed the City

Manager and Mayor to sign the agreement.

The next agreement Task Order No. 1 is for our Wastewater permit also referred to as the NPDES Permitting Assistance and Sulfate Response. This agreement states AE2S will provide assistance with the NPDES permit renewal and proposed sulfate limit review response. Cost will be \$14,500 to complete the permit. Enderson asked if this was budgeted for to which Kent said no, and it will have to come out of the wastewater reserves. After review it was moved by Enderson, seconded by Maanum and carried unanimously to approve the Task Order NO. 1 project agreement and directed the City Manager and Mayor to sign the agreement.

Lastly was task Order No. 2 which is for AE2S to conduct combined virtual/in person meetings to review the operations of the Wastewater plant and conclude any suggested changes to the plant. This will be at a cost of \$55,000. After further discussion, it was moved by Carruth, seconded by Landmark and carried unanimously to approve the Task Order NO. 2 project agreement and directed the City Manager and Mayor to sign the agreement.

Wolffington approached to discuss the proposed WAPA Rate increase and offer his perspective on the rate increase. He discussed the Pick-Sloan program which is a collection of dams on the upper Missouri River, which is where the majority of our power comes from. He went on to explain their rate increase over two years will equal a 14% increase in the rates the City of Benson will have to pay \$108,000 per year over the next two years. He said the City is in a two-year electrical rate study, and these costs are included in that rate study. Options to defray cost are to buy down the rate increase or introduce the increase to our consumers over the next few years. He explained some of the reasons for the increase are hiring extra people, which he feels has to do with the Renewed Energy Certificates (REC) which could play a major part of our rates in the future. He explained green energy valued megawatts, and how REC will play into future power rates. He said the State of MN legislature passed a renewable energy standard stating by 2040, 100% of our energy needs to come from green energy (not carbon free) sources. The REC will be in high demand. Currently our power is 20% renewable and 80% non-renewable. WAPA has issued to it's users, 1 REC for every MGW hour they produce with hydro they generate. MRES is managing the REC for us. Wolffington touched on the tremendous pressures to send our hydro power to California and across the Country, and that we are well represented with CGMC. He recommended we send the enclosed memo to WAPA so our concerns can be heard. It was moved by Enderson, seconded by Maanum and carried unanimously to approve sending the enclosed memo to WAPA, copying MRES as well.

Harris and Krohse approached the Council to discuss the Wastewater Flood Wall project. Harris said in June we received bids on this project and they came in \$1.2 over budget. We have reached out to the Federal EDA for possible additional funding. Our bids will expire at the end of August. Since finding funding is time consuming, and in the interest of respect to the low bidder on our project, Harris suggested rejecting all bids, so we can finally determine the course of the project. Harris said there is a real possibility we may have to make major changes to our current wastewater plant, and if that happens, we will put money into the floodwall which will not be appropriate any longer. It was moved by Carruth, seconded by Maanum and carried unanimously to reject all bids. There was discussion on lack of funding. Krohse said she talked to Robert Lee at the Federal EDA and he would never recommend termination, but the termination for convenience, not cause, would require us to write a letter explaining our cost overage, as all projects from 2019 are way over. She went on to say we could conduct value engineering to show other possible solutions. It may only take \$200,000-\$300,000 off the project. Evenson said we need to find out if there is more funding out there. Wolffington asked what would the result be if we asked to scale back this floodwall to the original 2019 berm design that would have cost us \$700,000, and have we asked that question. Krohse said she doesn't believe they would approve and could ask, but feels they require it to be an accredited floodwall. Harris asked if the rest of Council would like the Environmental

Impact Study done for a chance at additional funding. Krohse said it would cost about \$2,500 to do this. Evenson said he would like to try for the additional funding and directed Krohse to move forward with it at a cost not to exceed \$2,500.

Nelson approached to discuss a large sink hole at the intersection of Wisconsin Ave. & 12th St. S. He feels this is caused by the sanitary sewer, which is at a depth of 14'. Other considerations of the project are a storm sewer above the sanitary sewer and a brick manhole, which will most likely crumble once the dirt is excavated around it. The hole will be very large. The sewer main is a major sewer main that goes to the waste treatment plant. Just to run by-pass during the project repair will cost \$50,000. He went on to say while researching the project, he found a shoring tool called the "Easy Dig". It is a 4' diameter piece of shoring equipment, and when used with the jet vac, it will allow the size of the excavation to be much smaller. The cost for the shoring unit is \$22,000. This is not a budgeted item. Kent said funding would come out of the sewer fund reserves. Nelson said he is requesting permission from Council to purchase the unit, but would like to send a camera into the sewer to be sure exactly what we are working with. He said if the findings do not fit the use of the Easy Dig, he will not purchase it. After discussion, it was moved by Landmark, seconded by Carruth and carried unanimously to approve the purchase of the Easy Dig shoring equipment contingent on confirmed findings of the camera work.

Addeline Deto has been working on the Lead Line inventory all cities are required to conduct. She reviewed the history and what she and the other engineering students have compiled. The Council thanked her for her work.

Kent approached the Council. She said two years ago we purchased our own garbage carts and distributed them to all residents in the City. Since then we have experienced damaged carts, extra carts going to Cottage Square and a large demand for the smaller carts, which we are out of. She said \$5,000 was in the budget for new carts. However, when she ordered them, their minimum order is 170 carts. She presented a capital outlay request to purchase 170 carts at a cost of \$9,979.46. She said the balance of the cost will come out of reserves. She said she expects to possibly order every couple of years. After discussion, it was moved by Enderson, seconded by Maanum and carried unanimously approve the purchase of 170 garbage carts from Cascade Engineering at a cost of \$9,979.46.

There being no further business to come before the Council a motion was made by Maanum, seconded by Landmark and carried unanimously to adjourn the Council meeting at 7:22 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk