



**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
October 3, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

Present: Mayor: Charlie Miner; Council: Jahn Dyvik, Mike Feldmann, Gina Joyce, and Deirdre Kvale

Staff Present: City Administrator: Scott Weske; Fire Chief: Mike Heiland; Finance/Utilities Officer: Amanda Nowezki; and City Clerk: Jeanette Moeller

Absent: None

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MAYOR'S COMMENTS – LONG LAKE NEWS, MEETING REVIEW AND UPDATES

Mayor Miner noted that the City Council had met in a work session prior to the regular meeting at which the Council had discussed proposed rates and schedule changes for utility billing.

APPROVE AGENDA

A motion was made by Joyce, seconded by Dyvik, to approve the agenda as presented. Ayes: all.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda consisted of the following:

- A. Approve Minutes of the September 19, 2023 City Council Work Session Meeting
- B. Approve Minutes of the September 19, 2023 City Council Meeting
- C. Approve Minutes of September 27, 2023 City Council Special Work Session
- D. Vendor Claims and Payroll
- E. Receive 3rd Quarter 2023 Revenues and Expenditures as of September 30, 2023
- F. Adopt Resolution No. 2023-40 Appointing Fire Chief Michael Heiland as a Regular Employee Recognizing Receipt of a Satisfactory Evaluation of his Probationary Period and Approving a Salary Step Increase

Mayor Miner called out Consent Agenda Item F and commended Fire Chief Heiland for his work for the City and the Fire Department, including starting the duty crew model.

A motion was made by Feldmann, seconded by Joyce, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Ayes: all.

OPEN CORRESPONDENCE

No one was in attendance to address the City Council during Open Correspondence.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Public Hearing: Certification of Unpaid Delinquent City Utility Accounts and Services Invoices for Assessment/Collection

City Clerk Moeller explained that on an annual basis, a City has the ability to certify to the County delinquent utility accounts as well as unpaid general service charges which can then be collected with the following year's taxes. The property owner with the charge proposed for certification this year had been notified of the pending certification action and had not submitted any appeal in writing.

Mayor Miner opened the public hearing at 6:38 pm. There being no comments, he closed the public hearing.

A motion was made by Miner, seconded by Kvale, to adopt Resolution No. 2023-39 for the certification and collection of unpaid delinquent 2023 water and sewer utility charges, recycling program fees, stormwater charges, legal pass through, and unpaid general service charges. Ayes: all.

Consider Adoption of New City Utilities/Recycling Billing Schedule and Billing Rates

Mayor Miner commented that the Council had been discussing the issue of utility rates for quite some time and thanked staff for the information that they have put together for the Council.

Finance/Utilities Officer Nowezki reported that the first Resolution submitted by staff for the Council's consideration would convert the City's utility billing schedule from quarterly billing to a monthly billing cycle, and the second Resolution prepared for Council was for the adoption of a new utility rate structure. She advised that the City had experienced a combined five-year loss of \$572,000 in the utility funds, and provided a detailed review of the suggested changes to utility billing rates, fees and usage tiers. She presented example scenarios representative of low, medium, and high volume users that showed quarterly billing amounts as well as what they would pay with monthly billing under the new proposed rates for both residential and commercial users.

Mayor Miner reiterated that the Council had held in depth discussion about this topic at recent work sessions.

Nowezki noted that staff would work hard over the next few months to notify residents of these changes, including sending information out on Facebook, the ListServ, in a City newsletter, and also by including an insert with upcoming quarterly utility billing. She stated that staff intended to give everyone time to prepare and to ask questions about the changes. She added that her phone number and extension would be on all the utilities communications so people would be able to get in touch with her directly with their questions.

Moeller assured the Council that staff planned to create an informational handout that would be easy to understand.

Council member Dyvik observed that he would also like it to be communicated that sewer rate changes are largely due to the Metropolitan Council fees that are being charged to the City.

Nowezki noted that the proposed new utility billing \$10 Metropolitan Council sewer treatment fee to be charged would not even cover half of what the City pays.

Mayor Miner reflected that the Council had talked about the sewer utility rates issue since he came into office. He stated that Council had essentially been kicking the can down the road and had not addressed the issue despite the sewer fund continually losing money.

Nowezki mentioned that simply going with a blanket rate increase would not work and that her methodology had been to focus on a way to address rates fairly for the classes of users.

Mayor Miner highlighted some of the reasons that he believed making the change from quarterly to monthly would be a good change.

A motion was made by Dyvik, seconded by Kvale, to adopt Resolution No. 2023-41 approving changing the City's utility and curbside recycling billing cycle from a quarterly basis to a regular monthly basis.

Anita Secord, 114 Brown Road N, asked if she could address the Council.

Mayor Miner explained that this agenda item was not a public hearing matter, but invited her to briefly address the Council.

Ms. Secord asked if people were charged for recycling regardless of whether they chose to recycle or not.

Nowezki clarified that the recycling fee was a fixed fee that goes on every bill.

Ms. Secord stated that she would like to suggest that every City that has this issue with Metropolitan Council push back. Metropolitan Council representatives are not voted in, but rather are appointed, and she voiced her frustration that appointed positions have access to so much of the taxpayers' money. She indicated that she felt it was unfair that they strap the cities so much and impact their ability to function. She expressed frustration about the various ways the County and State have made it more expensive to live across the board, and shared that she recently had to go a few months without her medication because she could not afford it. She stated that she wanted the Council to understand what the citizens of Long Lake are facing and urged them to do something because they have more power than she does as just a citizen. She closed in giving her appreciation to the Council and City staff for all they do, and stated that she felt Metropolitan Council was the largest hindrance to the City that she has ever seen.

Ayes: all.

A motion was made by Miner, seconded by Kvale, to adopt Resolution No. 2023-42 establishing water, sewer, and storm sewer utility rates and tiers; and establishing curbside residential recycling rates. Ayes: all.

Updates and Discussion Regarding Fire Department Matters

Mayor Miner reported that Orono and Long Lake had attended court ordered mediation on September 26, 2023. He read aloud the statement that the City released on September 28, 2023: *The City of Long Lake made a concerted effort to obtain a mutual resolution with the City of Orono during court-ordered mediation on September 26, 2023. Long Lake was very willing to discuss a middle-ground solution, but in the end, the parties could not reach a settlement. As such, the present contract remains in effect until December 31, 2025, and is subject to the Court's temporary injunction order. What specifically occurred during the mediation is confidential pursuant to the Minnesota Rules of Evidence and the mediation*

agreement signed by both parties. The Long Lake City Council will evaluate its next steps regarding litigation against the City of Orono related to the court case (Court File No: 27-CV-23-9758.

Mayor Miner added that the temporary injunction order was available to be viewed on the City's website.

Council member Dyvik recalled that at the last Council meeting he'd shared that they had just held the Fire Advisory Board meeting that he had thought went well. In that meeting, after discussion, there was agreement by Orono and Long Lake regarding the Long Lake Fire Department budget which he thought was a good accomplishment in light of the current environment between the two cities. He had been optimistic that the member cities would approve the budget; however, approval of the budget had been tabled at the subsequent Orono City Council meeting. He mentioned that it may have been because Orono Council member Crosby was not going to be at the meeting, but he voiced his ongoing hope that Orono will take action and approve the budget.

Mayor Miner advised that the annual Fire Prevention Open House will be held on October 9, 2023 at 6:30 pm.

Fire Chief Heiland encouraged the Council and residents to come out to the Open House and to bring their families along.

Council member Dyvik asked Fire Chief Heiland to pass along an update on the duty crews when he has additional data gathered, similar to what he had done for the month of August.

Fire Chief Heiland offered the following additional updates:

- The Fire Department had two members come off of probation last night.
- The Department will be participating in the Orono Homecoming Parade on Friday night, which they are excited about.
- He indicated that he'd received a communication from someone that mentioned the possibility of starting a local fire academy for all the new firefighters. If it happens, it would help bring down the costs of training because all the departments and firefighters in the area could train together.
- He noted that there were some repairs completed today on all three engines.
- He reported that he had just dropped off three new background checks with the Wayzata Police Department for candidates interested in serving on the Fire Department.
- Battalion Chief Chris Adams is filling in as the Interim Assistant Chief until the end of the year.

Mayor Miner stated that Assistant Chief Shane Gardner's last day in that position was last week, and Mayor Miner had been able to reach out to him and thank him for his service.

Fire Chief Heiland added that Shane Gardner had done a great job in his position and shared that he had even received a standing ovation from the firefighters at their meeting the previous night.

OTHER BUSINESS

Appreciation for Utility Billing Efforts - Council member Kvale expressed her gratitude to Finance/Utilities Officer Nowezki for all the work she put into the recent utility billing changes.

Upcoming Board Meetings - Council member Joyce reported that before the next City Council meeting there will be a Park Board meeting as well as a Long Lake Waters Association meeting, and she would bring back updates following the meetings.

Fall Leaf Pickup Dates - Moeller indicated that the annual fall curbside leaf pickup dates had been scheduled for Tuesdays, November 7 and November 14, 2023. She reminded residents to make sure they only use compostable bags and to call their garbage hauler if their pickup is missed. She asked that residents also be sure that the bagged leaves they put out are from their own yard only and not a collection of leaves from friends and family members.

LMCC Considering Public Works Office – Moeller stated that Jim Lundberg at the LMCC had communicated to her that they have not ruled out the City's potential office site for them within the Public Works building, but were just currently awaiting an appraisal.

ADJOURN

Hearing no objection, Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting by general consent at 7:21 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Weske
City Administrator