



**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
December 3, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

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

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

Staff Present: City Administrator: Scott Weske; City Clerk: Jeanette Moeller; and Finance Director: Amanda Nowezki

Absent: Council: Gina Joyce (with prior notice)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mayor Miner noted that the Council had met just one week ago and he did not have a lot of new information to report tonight; however, he shared the following updates:

The City Council had met in a work session prior to the regular meeting at which they had discussed proposed utility and recycling rates for 2025.

He voiced his hope that everyone had a nice Thanksgiving and had been able to celebrate with family and friends. He thanked the 'elf' that had taken the time to decorate with holiday lighting around City Hall and the Council Chambers.

Regarding upcoming events, the Park Board's annual Holiday Tree Lighting event will take place from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm on Friday, December 6 in Holbrook Park. On December 7, the Long Lake Fire Department Auxiliary will hold their annual Food and Toy Drive event at Fire Station 1 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. He also mentioned that the Long Lake Holiday Home Decorating Contest was getting ready to launch and encouraged residents to be on the lookout for an email with details.

APPROVE AGENDA

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

CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda consisted of the following:

- A. Approve Vendor Claims and Payroll
- B. Adopt Resolution No. 2024-52 Approving the Issuance (Renewal) of 2025 Tobacco Licenses
- C. Adopt Resolution No. 2024-54 Approving the Issuance (Renewal) of 2025 Liquor Licenses

A motion was made by Dyvik, seconded by Feldmann, 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

Adoption of New City Utilities/Recycling Rates

Finance Director Nowezki reviewed the proposed 2025 utility and recycling rates and presented the factors that have contributed to staff's recommendations.

The Council discussed the organics mandate and how it had affected residents.

Nowezki noted that by implementing a City-wide organics contract, they were able to offer residents a discount by having one hauler that would handle the entire City.

Moeller outlined some of the details of organics recycling and how information on the change to a City contract will be communicated to residents who may be interested in participating. She indicated that the City was anticipating saving residents about \$3.00 off their organics recycling fees and added that the organics charge on refuse hauler billings to households should be coming off beginning January 1, 2025.

Nowezki explained that the expected impact of the utility rate changes on households will result in around a \$10/month increase on their utility bills. She added that if residents have questions or concerns about the line items on their bills, she wanted them to feel free to contact her by phone or email.

Moeller recalled that she and Finance Director Nowezki had put together a handout that had explained the 2024 rates, and are planning to update that information for the new proposed rates in 2025.

Nowezki clarified that an updated utility rate informational handout would be sent out in January, and residents would not see a change in their bills until February.

Mayor Miner indicated that the Council had a thorough discussion of the proposed utility rates during their work session meeting. He noted that the Metropolitan Council sewer treatment fee that the City was being charged was significantly increasing in 2025, and it will now show up as a separate line item as a pass-through on utility bills so everyone can see it.

Nowezki emphasized that the Metropolitan Council treatment fee line item will truly be a pass-through amount, so if the City's costs go down in this area, the residents' costs will decrease as well because the obligation just passes through.

Council member Kvale stated that she would like to see if a Metropolitan Council representative would attend a future City Council meeting so they could talk about the treatment charge, projections for treatment and flows, and what their fee increase was related to.

Nowezki reiterated that she would encourage residents to call her if they have questions rather than simply talking about their questions via social media, for example. She assured the Council that she would listen to all questions and concerns that were shared and try to explain the situation. She pointed out that within the packet materials, there had been an error on one of her spreadsheets.

Moeller mentioned that they could fix the error within the e-packet information so it would be accurate.

A motion was made by Miner, seconded by Dyvik, to adopt Resolution No. 2024-53 establishing water, sewer and stormwater utility rates and establishing curbside residential recycling and residential organics recycling rates as proposed. Ayes: all.

Moeller added that at the next Council meeting, the Council will hold a public hearing on an ordinance amending chapters of the City's code related to organics. She stated that when the Council sees this information in their packet and has questions, she encouraged them to reach out to staff right away prior to the meeting.

Public Meeting to Discuss Proposed 2025 Budget and Levy

City Administrator Weske introduced his presentation by advising that the state requires the City to hold a Truth in Taxation public meeting on an annual basis in order to give residents the opportunity to ask questions or comment on the City's upcoming budget and levy. He noted that the Council would not be taking any action, but would be considering adoption of the final budget and levy at their December 17 meeting. He reviewed some of the factors that went into determining the City's 2025 budget including the fact that City will not be receiving any Local Government Aid (LGA) funds; expectations for building permit revenue to remain relatively flat because they are not anticipating any large developments; planned salary step increases and a COLA adjustment; and projected increases in insurance premiums. He reviewed the 2024 final numbers as compared to the proposed 2025 recommended levy amount, and explained that he anticipated the adjusted net tax capacity would result in little to no change to the local City tax rate for 2025. He shared details of the history of the City's tax levy beginning in 2017 and indicated that the proposed levy increase from 2024 was currently 10.65%. He commented that other items to consider for the budget were upgrades to City Hall, a rehabilitation project for Well No. 1, preparation for possible expenses related to the Fire Department, and replacement of the mowers prior to the spring. He reiterated that tonight's discussion was intended to provide an opportunity for residents to comment, but there was nobody in the audience tonight.

Council member Kvale observed that the City's budget had really increased from 2017 to 2025.

Weske noted that much of the increases had been due to overall inflation and the overall expense of operating with things like salaries, workers compensation, and health insurance.

Council member Dyvik added that the City's cost for fire service would be going up in 2025. He reflected that it would be interesting to see a column dedicated to inflation in order to see how it compares.

Mayor Miner added that he had looked at some other cities to see what levy increases they were proposing for 2025 and Long Lake appeared to be in the middle of the pack.

Councilmember Kvale asked why the debt service had gone up since 2024.

Weske replied that it was due to how the County has it scaled as the debt service is prorated and adjusted every year. He reiterated that no Council action was required other than to give residents the opportunity to comment, which they have done, even though nobody was present. He stated that at the December 17 Council meeting, he would be prepared to go into more detail and the Council will be asked to give their final approval.

Council member Feldmann commented that he felt 2025 was a unique year because there was so much uncertainty around things like the Fire Department and associated legal fees.

Updates Regarding Fire Department Matters

Mayor Miner reported that there were no major updates to highlight since the Council's last meeting. He shared that there had been an article in the 'Laker Pioneer' newspaper about the City of Mound and discussions happening out there related to the potential creation of a new fire district.

Council member Kvale asked if Mound was looking to join with St. Bonifacius.

Mayor Miner confirmed that was one of the options they were looking at for creating a new fire district, but were also having discussions with the West Suburban Fire District and Maple Plain Fire.

Council member Kvale asked about the grant the City had received related to possible cooperation with Wayzata.

Weske stated he was still waiting for them to create a login for him so he can visit the Department of Public Safety's website. He indicated that he had sent off a draft RFP to City Attorney Thames to look over and would also be meeting with Wayzata City Manager Dahl on December 5 for coffee. He explained that he needed more input from Wayzata before he could give any information to the Council.

OTHER BUSINESS

Midco Fiber Installation Project – Council member Dyvik asked about Midco, their fiber lines that were being laid in Orono, and asked why they had not contacted Long Lake. He suggested that someone from the City contact them and try to get on the list because he felt access to fiber optic would be good for the City. He also liked the idea of having the option of another service provider. Moeller suggested that she could draft an email to Jim Lundberg at the LMCC and see what he may know about the situation. Mayor Miner recalled that he had spoken with Mr. Lundberg a few months ago and was told that Midco was seeking a franchise agreement with them. Long Lake is represented by the LMCC and Orono isn't, which is why Orono had been approached separately. He indicated that his understanding was that Midco was very interested in building out in other communities, including Long Lake. Moeller reiterated that she would send Jim Lundberg an email requesting an update. Council member Dyvik noted that he felt the City should have a choice and asked whether the LMCC had any kind of agreement with Midco. Mayor Miner clarified that his understanding was that Midco was working with the LMCC on getting an agreement in place so that they can potentially cover all of the LMCC cities, including Long Lake, with their fiber service. He added that he had also heard that Mediacom was taking steps to get more fiber in the area as well, but agreed that having the choice between two providers would be great for the City because it would create competition.

Preliminary Audit Work - Nowezki reported that preliminary 2024 audit work will begin on December 4 and she is hoping that audit preparation will be able to be wrapped up in January or February of 2025.

Recognizing Holiday Decorating Contest Sponsors - Moeller shared that the sponsors, so far, for the annual Holiday Home Decorating contest were: Liquor Barn; Birch's on the Lake; Bucks Pub; and Gopher Ace. She expressed her gratitude to the businesses for their sponsorship because they really make it special for the contest winners.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule - Mayor Miner reminded the Council that their next meeting would be on December 17, with an EDA or work session meeting prior to the regular meeting. Moeller confirmed that it would be a work session meeting held before the December 17 regular meeting. She added that the agenda for the regular Council meeting on December 17 was shaping up to be pretty well stacked, and gave a brief overview of the expected agenda items.

ADJOURN

Hearing no objection, Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting by general consent at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Weske
City Administrator