



**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
September 19, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm.

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

Staff Present: City Administrator: Scott Weske; Public Works Director: Sean Diercks; and City Clerk: Jeanette Moeller

Absent: Council: Gina Joyce (with prior notice)

APPROVE AGENDA

A motion was made by Dyvik, seconded by Feldmann, to approve the agenda as amended, with the removal of the Pledge of Allegiance which typically occurs at the regular business meeting. Ayes: all.

OPEN CORRESPONDENCE

BUSINESS ITEMS

Continue Discussion of 2024 Preliminary Levy and Budget

City Administrator Weske gave an overview of the adjustments that had been made to the proposed 2024 preliminary levy and budget since the Council's last discussion. He noted that the proposed levy increase would result in the City's tax rate remaining flat.

Mayor Miner noted that he would like to find out why the City pays so much to Mediacom for services at Station 1 and Station 2.

City Clerk Moeller mentioned she was unfamiliar with their bill but is aware that they have a VOIP phone system. The billing would be covering internet as well a rental of that phone service.

Mayor Miner called out that the bill reflects an expense of \$570 for Station 2 and \$713 for Station 1.

Moeller agreed that seemed like a lot for those services.

Council member Dyvik requested that staff take a look at the package with Mediacom.

Weske added that he believed the City was under a contract with Mediacom for the Fire Department.

Council member Kvale suggested that staff reach out and see whether Jim Lundberg of the LMCC can get involved.

The Council reviewed details included within the Mediacom bill.

Council member Dyvik asked if the increase in the levy of \$170,850 equated to 10.83% or 12.145% because he'd observed that both percentages were referenced in the report.

Council and Weske clarified that the levy percentage increase was 12.145%.

Council member Dyvik commented that following the Fire Advisory Board meeting, the Fire Department budget had been reduced by about \$24,000. He questioned whether that had been reflected in this information.

Weske explained that the Council meeting materials had already been printed by the time the Fire Advisory Board had met.

The Council discussed the conversation points at the Fire Advisory Board and how the outcomes would necessitate changes to the proposed budget.

Council member Dyvik reflected that he understood that the current levy was preliminary and it can be decreased at final adoption, but he asked what the tax rate would be if the tax rate went down to something like 32.9%.

Moeller observed that the City's expenses are simply rising, and pointed out that the City has many equipment and facility needs that need to be addressed that are not budgeted.

Council member Feldmann indicated that each percentage point reduction would equate to about a \$47,000 impact.

Council member Dyvik noted that he did not intend to 'fall on the sword' over the point but would like to at least chip away at reducing the tax rate. He stated that because the levy percentage currently sits at around 12%, he has already had people commenting that the City will be raising their taxes and feels like they think the City is making money off of the residents and just spending it willy-nilly.

Moeller added that it is very important for residents to realize that what drives up their taxes is not necessarily what the City does, but that their property taxes increase due to increases in property valuations.

Council member Dyvik suggested that he would really like to see the City lower the tax rate if possible when the final levy is adopted.

The Council moved the discussion onto the proposed 2024 employee wages and exploring contracting with an outside vendor for a potential compensation study. Council and staff reviewed the cash balances in various funds, potential CIP cost differences from what was initially budgeted for some of the Public Works equipment, paving projects and boat launch improvements, and utility changes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Power Stations at Council Dais - Moeller reported that staff had contracted with Milow Electric to install power/USB hubs on the Council dais, with the work scheduled for October 6.

Slow-No Wake Ordinance Language – Moeller shared that she had spoken with Orono's Community Development Director about the slow-no wake ordinance language for Long Lake. She had been advised that Orono is in the process of recodifying their code which may hopefully be

completed by the end of winter, and adding the updated slow-no wake water level for Long Lake is on their staff list of items to be included in the recodification.

Using E-Packets – Moeller offered to give the Council a demonstration on how to operate, take notes, and highlight information in Council meeting e-packets using various software for .pdf viewing for any members who may be interested.

ADJOURN

Hearing no objection, Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting by general consent at 6:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Weske
City Administrator