

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH BRANCH IN THE COUNTY OF CHISAGO AND IN THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

REGULAR SESSION

February 10, 2015

CALL TO ORDER: The North Branch City Council met in regular session and Mayor Hagen-Kennedy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers present were Kathy Blomquist, Theresa Furman, Kirsten Hagen-Kennedy, Joyce Borchardt, and Robert Canada. Staff members present were City Administrator Konrad and Public Works Director Williams.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Alex Bates of 38050 Lincoln Trail addressed the Council and said the residents are tired of personal attacks made by Councilmembers for political gain. There are serious problems in this Country and in this City and it is time to get to work and stop bickering. The taxes are too high, foreclosures continue, and the business tax base is not growing. The resident said that friends tell him they are leaving as soon as they can. He has been at the last two meetings and did not see any transparency or real leadership but only saw personal attacks and that is not what is respectful and not what was promised during the campaign. He then asked Council to get back on track and work forward together.

Peter Schaaps of 5690 360th Street said he would like to see the City reorganize its huge debt load. He then said that last week he went to the worksession where the Mayor and Council were briefed by Finance Director Hill and he would like to thank Mr. Hill and previous Council for the tremendous work accomplished so far to begin the arduous process of restructuring the massive debt load and put the City on a road to debt recovery. Mr. Schaaps said that most citizens have no understanding of the debt concerns and are hoping someone is at the helm taking care of this extremely difficult financial problem. Mr. Schaaps would like to encourage current Council to keep up the most excellent work that was begun by the previous Council.

Amanda Darwin of 7575 387th Street said that she just moved back after a time away and she wanted to say she has read everything as it is published and she understands the discussions on water and utility fees and things but what she is not seeing is anything about things that don't involve the trailer park and other unmetered places. Ms. Darwin said that as a resident of North Branch she is paying almost three times as the other cities she called and that alone is making them stay in North Branch an unrealistic adventure. They have to have water and it is unaffordable to stay in North Branch with the way things are going.

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Cindy Erickson of 6500 Maple Street said she came to ask a question. She then asked about the bill introduced in the legislature to increase the Water & Light commissioners but there is language that is different than what was proposed and reviewed by Council. She then asked why the language submitted to the legislature was different than proposed.

Laurie Warner of 40589 Golden Avenue said her topic is regarding the water as she has been following the issue. There are a lot of interesting comments in an article she read about the unmetered trailer parks. She then asked the Council to work with property owners to resolve the matter.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- Claims - \$215,934.69
- Minutes – January 15, 2015 Work Session Minutes
- Final Pay Request – Safe Routes to School II – Knife River - \$18,749.68
- ~~Electronic Communications Policy~~

Motion by Borchardt, seconded by Canada, to approve the Consent Agenda Items A, B, C as presented. All voted AYE. Motion carried.

5D Electronic Communications Policy

Borchardt said that the Attorney had suggested adding a disclaimer for social media pages. She requested that it be added to the policy.

Motion by Furman, seconded by Borchardt to table to the next Council meeting. All voted AYE. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

NONE

COMMITTEE/COMMISSIONS:

7A	PLANNING COMMISSION	NONE
7B	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY	NONE
7C	PARK COMMISSION	NONE
7D	WATER AND LIGHT COMMISSION	NONE

STAFF REPORTS:

- 8A ENGINEERING/PUBLIC WORKS**
 - A1 Lead Wastewater Operator Edblad**
 - **Accept Resignation**
 - **Approve Temporary Part Time**
 - **Authorize Advertisement**

Williams indicated that Lead Wastewater Operator Edblad is going to the City of Cambridge. Mr. Edblad has agreed to a monthly fee to submit

necessary reports monthly as the City must have someone with a Class B license to do so.

Williams would like approval to advertise for a part time snowplow driver as he has been informed that the person may be leaving.

Motion by Furman, seconded by Canada, to accept the Resignation of Operator Edblad, Approve Temporary Part Time Agreement with Mr. Edblad, and Authorize Advertisement for Replacement Lead Wastewater Operator and approval to Advertise for Part Time Snowplow Driver as needed. All voted AYE. Motion carried.

8B ADMINISTRATION

B1 Ordinance Amendment – Meeting Date

Konrad noted that an Ordinance Amendment is required to change City Council meeting dates.

Motion by Borchardt, seconded by Canada, to adopt Ordinance No. 222-15, "AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CITY CODE ARTICLE III CITY COUNCIL, DIVISION 2 MEETINGS, REGARDING CITY COUNCIL MEETING DATES." All voted AYE. Motion carried.

Konrad noted that a port is necessary to stream Council meetings and the part has been ordered and the goal is to stream the first meeting on March 24.

8C	BUILDING	NONE
8D	FINANCE	
	D1 Draft Year End Financial Report	INFO
8E	LEGAL	NONE

NOTICES AND COMMUNICATIONS:

9A	Blandin Broadband Grant Community Meeting	INFO
	Konrad noted that the Chisago County HRA/EDA received a Blandin Broadband Grant. Council and residents are invited to attend the upcoming community meeting but you must RSVP.	
9B	Winter Fest	INFO
	Konrad noted that Winter Fest is this weekend.	

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: **NONE**

NEW BUSINESS: **NONE**

MAYOR AND COUNCIL:

12A Upcoming Agendas

INFO

12B Sewer Rates

Hagen-Kennedy said that water is a big deal but the City Council is not in charge of the Water Rates but is responsible for sewer rates. A PFA loan was taken out to extend the loan on the sewer plan for 30 years but she feels the rates are just too high.

Blomquist said the City needs to get the communication out there about sewer rates. Blomquist said the City needs to find ways to save millions to make a difference in rates.

Hagen-Kennedy said that when she gets her bill it is all run together and does not distinguish sewer from water. Her sewer bill is more than the water bill. Hagen-Kennedy said it is important to have people on the Commission that have City water and sewer as they have an incentive to keep rates low. She would like to see the 20-year growth properties brought onto services if they are slated to be brought on because that is how rates go down for the group as a whole.

Konrad noted that Water & Light does the billing for the City at no cost so that would be an expense to have someone do the bills for the City and it would be duplicating work.

Borchardt would like to have maps denoting where the services are for developers. Furman asked how many homes would equal a stagnant rate increase. She then said that right now there would not be a different as the money is needed now. Furman noted there are two areas one without services and one with City services.

Blomquist asked if the Council does not want a Commission. Borchardt would like a Committee not a Commission. Canada would like to try it.

Canada would like to have the Committee discuss both water and sewer because they are intertwined. Konrad noted that water rates are set by the Water and Light, not the City.

Furman asked about looking at the debt and divvying up among everyone. Konrad said that there are some residents that use a lot of water and some that use very little so that would not be a fair way to charge residents.

Time will be scheduled at an upcoming work session for the Water and Light and City staff to explain how rates are set.

12C ISO Rating

Borchardt outlined the huge accomplishment of the Fire Department, Water and Light and City Staff in reducing the City's ISO rating which provides for better insurance rates for residents.

Council agreed to sign a letter thanking them for their efforts.

Konrad noted the new rates will go into effect in April.

12D Water & Light Legislation

Blomquist said that last year the City told the representative the City wanted 5 members and it was put in for 7 and two would be Councilmembers with no residency requirement. Borchardt, Blomquist and Konrad went to meet with Representative Barrett and asked him to remove the residency and two members of the Council. The revised bill was never approved. This year a draft was sent by Representative Barrett saying there would be 5 members but the legislation introduced was the bill from last year and it is not what the City wanted.

Konrad indicated she emailed Representative Barrett and he said the bill should be the version submitted to the City at the last meeting and he will be corrected if it is not.

Motion by Borchardt, seconded by Hagen-Kennedy, to adjourn.

ADJOURNED: at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bridgitte Konrad, City Administrator
jrl/TOSS