

City of Vernon Center
8-8-23 @ 6pm
Interviews, PH, & Reg Council Meeting Minutes

Council Present: Mayor Dana Ziegler, Emily Edwards, Lisa Peterson, Wendy Bennett; Partial attendance Adam Finney
Staff Present: Clerk Diane Roelofs, PW Supervisor Mark Willette
Others Present: Kara Hansen, Denise Fritschmann, Tim Strommer-MR Messenger, Pat Krosch, Eng. Chris Knutson, Susan Giefer & friend

Mayor Ziegler called the Interview portion of the meeting to order at 5pm.

1st Interview: Kara Hansen was asked questions including what community meant to her, how she would handle a situation where someone was asking her to do something against city policy, how comfortable she is working alone and why. She was also asked if she has any methods or ideas to incorporate resident engagement with the city. She was told of the procedure of the job offer by council as the chosen applicant will receive a call at the end of the council meeting. The meeting was then stopped at 5:10pm.

With the opportunity to view the Drug and Alcohol annual video, Council then viewed the video starting at 5:13pm for compliance requirements of the Drug and Alcohol Awareness Program.

2nd Interview: Denise Fritschmann was asked the same questions and reviewed the procedures as the first applicant. Council briefly discussed the 2 applicants and stated that they both had very similar answers to the questions. The meeting went out of session at 5:44pm in anticipation of the Public Hearing starting at 6pm.

PUBLIC HEARING: ORD. #96 -- Mayor Ziegler called the Public Hearing to order at 6pm.

Open for discussion: Councilor Peterson inquired about future guidance for licensing to sell and advice that can be given about how cannabis will affect the city ordinances. Is adding sales tax a possibility for the city to have future revenue? League of MN Cities will be researched for help to the city for the upcoming year. Public Hearing was then closed at 6:05pm.

Mayor Ziegler reopened the Regular meeting at 6:05pm.

Agenda: #12 Zoning will have no discussion, therefore dropped off. 15c will be added to discuss Clerk Roelofs' wage. Councilor Edwards made a motion to approve the agenda with the changes. 2nd by Councilor Peterson, all approved, motion carried.

Consent Agenda: Councilor Bennett asked briefly about the FD report containing 3 new members, which will remain in the consent agenda and approved when motioned. The consent agenda included 7-10-23 & 7-26-23 meeting minutes, Checks for Month showing \$350,033.32 deposits and \$237,461.05 checks, July Cash Balance Investment Report, Savings & Loan Balances excel report, 20-23 Project expense report, Kopischke invoice paid after follow-up from last meeting, August and September calendars of events, VCFD July Report, 2023 Public Safety Aid info, BE Co. Call Log for July, property report, MNRW Finance Program letter about interim financing, USDA-RD approval of financing letter to MNRW, MDH Plan Review Approval, and the LMCIT Worker's Comp Notice of Premium. Councilor Edwards made a motion to approve the consent agenda. 2nd by Councilor Bennett, all approved, motion carried.

Additional Bills: Council reviewed the additional bills but added the cost of 12 easements to be recorded to Blue Earth County, that amount would be \$552 in addition to bills presented in the report. Councilor Edwards made a motion to approve the additional bills. 2nd by Councilor Bennett, all approved, motion carried.

MOTION for Transfer: Councilor Peterson made a motion to transfer the remaining savings balance in 411 to 411 checking. 2nd by Councilor Edwards, all approved, motion carried.

Citizen Concerns: Alley parking between Park and Oak St. south of main street was brought up as a safety issue. After council discussion, it was decided to send a reminder in the Newsletter. In the meantime, council/mayor members will keep an eye on the alley.

102 West St. N: Susan Giefer, property owner, was present and brought up the sump pump and sewer lateral letters that state June 30, 2023 as deadlines. It was brought up that deadline issues or concerns should be addressed prior to the deadline. The Engineer and PW Supervisor were asked when the project would construct Poplar St. E. Susan Giefer was asked if she would agree to extending the deadline until October 1, 2024 for both the sewer lateral capping at the foundation and rerouting the sump pump and waiving the fee until that date. She agreed and a coordinated letter will be sent. Mayor Ziegler made a motion to extend the sump pump and sewer lateral waiving sump pump fee until October 1, 2024. 2nd by Councilor Peterson, all approved, motion carried.

SCDP loan on this property has approximately 2 years left before the 10-year mark forgiving the loan. Mayor Ziegler gave an update on what has been done in the past with these loans when a property sells. Susan will check into what she can do so that she can offer to sell the property.

Water meter hookup at the property: 102 West St. N. was inspected by PW Supervisor Mark Willette and witnessed by Mayor Ziegler on 8-3-23. Pictures were presented to Council along with a summary report by Sup. Willette. Property owner, Susan Giefer, was given instructions to hire a licensed plumber to correctly hook up the water meter and to have PW supervisor inspect it prior to having the city turning on the water shut-off.

Infrastructure Project-Eng. Chris Knutson: Council reviewed the memo supplied by the city engineer. Holtmeier Const. out of Mankato had the lowest Total Bid in the amount of \$7,874,282.74 out of a total of 5 bids. SEH, Inc. is recommending that the city award the contract to Holtmeier. USDA-RD has given their concurrence as long as the council is aware of the city covering the first pay application if all documents have not been completed and MMB is not ready for releasing state bonding funds. The requirements for MMB will be worked on by RD, city clerk, PFA and possibly Shannon Sweeney. And the construction side of the project shows that the City's project share would be \$55,000. Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve Res. 2023-16 Accepting Bids from Holtmeier Const. in the amount of base bid \$7,618,218.19, Alternate 1 bid of \$245,064.55 with a Total Bid Amount of \$7,874,282.74. 2nd by Councilor Edwards, all approved, motion carried. A pre-construction meeting will be scheduled in 2 to 3 weeks and the contract will be drawn up, reviewed by city attorney and signed. It was brought up about the storm sewer culvert washing out on Norma Heckman's property—this will be determined at a later date. Mayor Ziegler asked for a construction schedule as soon as it is known so that residents have time to be prepared when their street is going to be under construction. Also, requested were who the sub-contractors for the job would be.

American Engineering Testing supplied an RFP, references and a contract for council to consider approving for materials testing during the project. The proposal estimated a "likely needed estimate" to be \$48,110.00. Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve the contract with American Engineering Testing to do testing on materials throughout the project. 2nd by Councilor Edwards, all approved, motion carried.

MKC, Inc.-Molly Krakowski supplied references, an RFP and a contract for auditing prevailing wages during the project with an hourly rate of \$65 not to exceed \$16,800. A packet will be provided to the city upon completion. Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve MKC, Inc. to do the prevailing wage audits. 2nd by Councilor Edwards, all approved, motion carried.

DEED Project: The punch list did not get provided to Holtmeier until lately. Eng. Knutson provided the final pay application from Holtmeier Const. and would like the council to approve it but not send a check until the punch list is complete. The \$7,930.21 pay app consists of a tracer wire box & 60T gravel to be delivered. Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve the final pay app in the amount of \$7,930.21 with the contingency that the punch list is complete and the gravel is delivered. 2nd by councilor Edwards, all approved, motion carried. A project meeting will be set up with Councilor Lisa Peterson, Mayor Dana Ziegler, Sup. Mark Willette and Clerk Diane Roelofs to go over items that can be added to the project and brought back to Council.

Councilor Adam Finney joined the meeting @ 6:49pm.

RPR for Project: The original owner engineer agreement for construction observation were between \$110 and \$145 per hour. John, who was on the DEED project, will be the RPR this fall if council approves and his rate per hour would be \$158 per hour. A different SEH RPR would be on the project starting next spring in which hourly rate will be less than the \$158. Councilor Bennett made a motion to raise the RPR rate from a maximum of \$145 to \$158 for construction observation. 2nd by Councilor Peterson, all approved, motion carried. Mayor Ziegler thanked Engineer Chris Knutson for sticking with us and is pleased that the city will be doing more than expected for this project. A neighborhood meeting will be held in the near future. The public hearing for special assessments can be held the Spring or Fall of 2024 and mailings will be sent by SEH, Inc.

Public Works: The contractor will be digging at 104 Railroad and PW Sup. Willette wanted to know if he should do a chlorine test. Council directed that he should do what would normally be done. PW will start obtaining bids for the temporary road for GMS access. He would like to have the city determine where the construction should start. City Hall sewer lateral is non-compliant which travels out 30' to 40' out to north and then east to Oak St. PW Willette proposed that the sewer be shortened up during the project. The project could be covered possibly by RD or DEED.

FD hall: PW Willette met with Assistant Chief Eric Pederson to go over where the water comes into the Fire Department but thinks it comes in from Main St. W. He would suggest installing a new water line from Oak St. N. A representative from DSG will be coming down to review this with Willette and Pederson.

Park Bench: Councilor Bennett presented a picture of the bench to be purchased for the City Park in memory of Stan and Betty Bergemann. Councilor Bennett made a motion to approve purchasing the bench for \$1288.85. 2nd by Councilor Finney, all approved, motion carried.

BUDGET questions: Mayor Ziegler will get back to PW about the budget questions.

Brown Grass: Mayor Ziegler will reach again to CVC to get an update.

Job Description: Councilor Edwards and Mayor Ziegler(personnel committee), will work on the job description and report back. Councilor Peterson made the comment that winter snow removal should be added to the description.

Rushmore: The city of Rushmore had questions about the contract. Mayor Ziegler will reach out to the Engineer Eric Meester and report back.

LJP Contract: The corrected contract was presented and reviewed by the clerk. Councilor Finney made a motion to approve the LJP Contract as presented. 2nd by Councilor Bennett, all approved, motion carried.

Ord. #96 An interim Ordinance for the City of Vernon Center, MN, Prohibiting the Establishment of New Uses or The Expansion of Existing Uses Related to Cannabis and Nonintoxicating Cannabinoids (CBD) Sales, Testing or Distribution for One Year: As a result of the Public Hearing, Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve Ord. #96 approving a one-year moratorium for the study of cannabis. 2nd by Councilor Edwards, all approved, motion carried.

Clerk-Treasurer Position: Council held discussion on what salary (\$45,000 to \$50,000) should be offered and to whomever it is offered it to. Comments were made that both applicants tonight were very good and answered all the questions very similarly. Councilor Edwards made a recommendation for Kara Hansen as her interview both times, she was very confident and submitted an impressive packet and showed a lot of drive. Personnel committee recommended because of the lack of governmental experience it should start at \$45,000. Councilor Finney asked Clerk Roelofs if she had any concerns and she replied that she appreciated the organization skills of Kara Hansen. Councilor Edwards made a motion to offer the position to Kara Hansen starting September 1, 2023. 2nd by Councilor Peterson, all approved, motion carried. Mayor Ziegler made a motion to offer to Kara Hansen a salary of \$45,000 which would be \$21.63 per hour if divided by 2080 annual hours. 2nd by Councilor Peterson, all approved, motion carried.

MN PERA-PRO: (Phased Retirement Option) Council reviewed the MN PERA-Pro agreement that would allow Clerk Roelofs to continue with part-time to help train in the new clerk-treasurer without a 30-day separation. Clerk Roelofs went on record stating that she only wants the PRO agreement to be 1 year in length starting on Oct. 1, 2023. Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve the PERA-PRO agreement during the training period. 2nd by Councilor Bennett, all approved, motion carried.

Mayor Ziegler made a motion to approve raising Clerk Roelofs' salary wage to \$25 per hour starting today. Councilor pointed out that the city has money left in the 2023 budget to cover it because of not hiring a summer employee and 2nd the motion. All approved, motion carried.

Miscellaneous

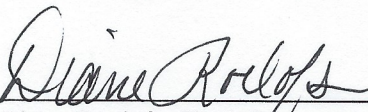
Emergency Siren: Last month the siren did not go off and after checking it out—it is in need of new batteries. A quote was given to the City to have batteries installed. BE County has received a grant to update all of the sirens in county. The city will be billed for the siren at the end of the grant if there is not enough money to cover the batteries. Mayor Ziegler had given prior approval to move ahead in replacing the batteries because of the importance of safety awareness. Clerk is to contact the Fire Chief to let him know they may need to alert citizens in the event of a weather warning.

Discrimination Complaint: Council reviewed the discrimination that was presented to the council. The complaint was against the city sending a letter requiring them to remove items off their curb while they felt others in the city are allowed to do it. Councilor Peterson will work with Clerk Roelofs on the response and reply within the 60-day deadline the city policy states.

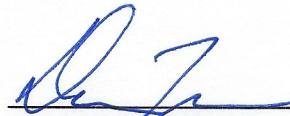
NEXT Meeting: Council decided to reschedule the Sept. 5th meeting to Sept. 7, 2023 at 6pm. This meeting will include the preliminary budget.

Adjourn: Councilor Peterson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:52pm. 2nd by Councilor Edwards, all approved, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by:



Diane Roelofs, Clerk-Treasurer



Dana Ziegler, Mayor

9-7-23

Date Approved