

Regular Council Meeting
August 05, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m. by Mayor Ottie (Robert) Baecker.

Roll Call: Deb Marsolek, Tim Hanson, Jason Ekern, Cleo Skroch, Linda Longmore, Randy Symicek.
6 Present, 0 Absent.

Others Present: City Attorney, LaVerne Michalak, Elaine Conrad, Kevin Kubis, Leah Kubis, Lois Boe, Elvecia Najera and daughter (Club Midway – La Hacienda), Kathy Manka and Debbie Kampa (Historical Society), Debbie Foss (Trempealeau County Times newspaper).

City Clerk Tiffany Bautch verified proof that public notice was given.

Approval of Agenda: Motion to approve - Skroch, 2nd - Hanson Ayes: 6 Nays: 0, Motion carried.

Minutes – July 01, 2024

Motion to approve - Marsolek, 2nd - Longmore Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Public Comments

Elaine Conrad commented about issues related to the culvert and water pooling near her residence in Frogtown (south side of the City). The Street Department will look into it.

There will be a Street Department meeting on Tuesday, August 13th.

The Water and Sewer Commission meeting will take place on Monday, August 19th. They will be discussing water issues and the budget.

Elvecia Najera appeared before the Council to request a status on her applications for music permits for events she is hosting in September. (This was moved up from the permits section of the agenda in order to allow her input.) Ms. Najera was previously asked to provide Fire, Health Department, and Safety inspections. There was some confusion in that she submitted an inspection report saying her premises were approved, but for an unoccupied building. She was also required to obtain two security officers with credentials established by the City Ordinances for her events due to numerous public noise complaints. She told the Council she had secured the services of one person, Chad Halvorson. Attorney Michalak will look into the Ordinances and report back to the Clerk with direction.

Licenses and Permits

Alcohol Beverage Server licenses were submitted by Maria Weaver, Chacon Nieve and Jag Deep Nin, all of Dollar General. Following a background check, a recommendation for approval of all three was made by Police Chief Jim Wanoriek. Motion to approve - Skroch, 2nd - Symicek Ayes: 6 Nays: 0, Motion carried.

A building permit license was submitted by Julie Dascher for a lean to. Motion to approve – Hanson, 2nd - Symicek Ayes: 6 Nays: 0, Motion carried.

A building permit license was submitted by Tom Kloss for a shed. Motion to approve – Marsolek, 2nd – Ekern Ayes: 5 Nays: 1, Motion carried.

A motion for a music permit was submitted by Ken Halama on behalf of SS. Peter and Paul Parish. Schools and churches do not require music permits per City Ordinances. No further action taken.

Old Business

A discussion was had regarding the development of the Block One alley, in which the City is preparing to swap small parcels of land with land owners to create a Veterans' park at the corner of Hwy. 93 and Washington Street. Attorney Michalak is waiting on information regarding mapping out the properties.

A discussion was held regarding the necessity to clear the sediment adjacent to Bugle Lake and DAM inspections permits. We are still waiting on a reply from the project engineer, Cedar Corp. and Davy. The DNR permit has been approved for the Lake Dredge. The City Clerk will continue to try and get ahold of Cedar Corp and Davy, Project Engineers on updates in both projects and will email his response to the Council once she receives further information.

Ekern started a discussion regarding Tri-City Sanitation and their request to increase trash cart fees by .55 for the 2025 calendar year citing inflation and landfill fee increases. He pointed out that Waste Management current charges \$18-\$19 a month for trash pick up, not including recyclables. Tri City wants to increase the monthly cost of the small carts from \$7.^{50*} (including the .50 processing fee the City receives) to \$8.⁰⁵ and the cost of the large trash carts from \$12.^{00*} to \$13.05. Hanson and Marsolek voiced concerns.

The Council concluded that this item will be tabled until our next meeting in order to have Tri-City owner, can attend to explain what has changed to warrant a price increase. Ekern will contact Tri City to have them attend the next meeting.

Leah and Kevin Kubis appeared on behalf of Backwoods Development and the properties they own in the Markham Addition. When developed, the covenant restricted the use of these properties as rentals. The Kubises have several houses there and were given a two-year extension to rent them while they were trying to sell, but the market has been bleak. They are actively trying to sell the properties including having an open house, are negotiating a possible land contract and have dropped the price. They requested an extension of the agreement they received from the City which expired on 07/31/24.

Motion to approve a six month extension contingent on no further extensions by Marsolek, 2nd – Hanson, Ayes: 1 Nays: 5, Motion failed. Motion by Ekern to allow a one year extension beginning 08/01/24 with quarterly status updates provided to the Council, 2nd – Skroch, Ayes: 6 Nays: 0, Motion carried.

The Council reviewed the final draft of the new Employee Handbook to become effective for all matters occurring on or after 08/05/24. Minor corrections were made by the Council, followed by a Motion by Longmore to approve the handbook with correction provided to the Council, 2nd – Hanson, Ayes: 6 Nays: 0, Motion carried.

City Clerk Tiffany Bautch advised the Council that City Assessor Mark Garlick will hold Open Book for the public to address and discuss their property taxes will take place on 10/23/24 from 1:00 p.m.- 7:00 p.m. Board of Review for persons contesting their assessment will be on 10/30/24 at 6:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. She will notify the Review Board and alternates of these dates.

New Business

A brief discussion was held regarding the City's 150th Sesquicentennial in 2026. This is be added to the next Council meeting agenda.

Members from the Independence Historical Society addressed the Council, describing how their organization has come together. They charge \$15/year for membership and are seeking historical items for the shelving they have acquired. They are currently using the basement room of City Hall and have painted the area. It is their hope the City will allow them to put a sign outside notifying passersby of their organization. The Council requested they come back to a future agenda showing a plan for the sign, design including dimensions and type of material, and the location where they want it place. The council will discuss it further at that time.

The Historical Society also asked for approval to paint a mural on the wall in the basement hallway. They have suggested other organizations should come and clean out their stuff within two weeks to allow them to further prepare the space they need.

A discussion was held regarding the dam inspection for Bugle Lake. This was tabled until the next meeting so we can obtain more input from the engineering companies.

The Council also addressed the necessity to hire an additional clerk to handle the City's business. The City has grown to the point where there is not enough time for the Clerk and Deputy Clerk to get things done. Motion to approve moving forward with hiring an Assistant Clerk/Treasurer– Skroch, 2nd – Hanson, Roll Vote: Ayes: 6 Nays: 0, Motion carried.

The Council did a mid-year review of the status of the City budget. Clerk Tiffany Bautch answered questions.

Committee Reports:

- Law Enforcement and Police- employee handbook is now approved.
- Library Board- a grant application was submitted and awaiting results.
- Library Events in the Park- The foam party had 98 in attendance. The Blondie Blue music duo had 109 in attendance. The library staff is updating their program catalog system.
- Street Committee- They will meet August 13; a used truck was purchased for the Street Dept. The Council expressed its gratitude for ask the work the Street Superintendent Eli Castleberry and his team did during the recent storms and subsequent clean up. The dedication, time and effort to keep the City and our community safe does not go unnoticed. The curb and gutter work on 4th Street is completed. It is estimated the black topping will be done in late September or early October. The large brush pile accumulated during the recent storms has been hauled out. The Street Department has started street sweeping. Disability parking signs have been put up at Four Seasons Park as requested.
- Water and Sewer Department- A plumber has installed cameras at the Public School to see what they can find regarding chemicals and sewer system issues. They plan to do an online survey done soon, as it is due in October.

Correspondence:

The City Council, Mayor and staff commended the City employees, Fire Department, Police Department and volunteers for how well they worked together during the storm cleanup. It was recommended that we publish a thank you in the paper as we are very proud of those who made this happen so smoothly. Alder Marsolek and Mayor Baecker will work on writing something up.

Approval of Invoices and Payments

Motion to approve paying the bills by– Skroch, 2nd – Ekern, Roll Vote: Ayes: 6 Nays: 0, Motion carried.

Future Meeting Dates

- Monthly Council Meeting- Tuesday, 09/03/24 at 6:15 p.m., as Monday is Labor Day.
- Ordinance Committee and Street Department meetings- scheduled for August 13, (but will need to be changed due to the election that day).
- Law Enforcement and Police Committee: Monday, 08/12/24, includes closed session.

Agenda

- Tri-City Sanitation; Owner to attend
- Lake Dredge Update
- Dam Update
- 150th (Sesquicentennial); City of Independence
- Chief of Police; employment status (probation period ending)
- Closed Session
- Lake District meeting before regular Council meeting

After having completed all matters before the Council, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY OF INDEPENDENCE

Tiffany Bautch, City Clerk