

City of Menahga
Special Meeting/Work Session City Council Minutes
Monday, March 25, 2024

a. Call to Order

The Menahga City Council held a Special Meeting/Work Session Meeting Monday, March 25, 2024.

Mayor Elizabeth Olson called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

b. Roll Call

Comprising a quorum of the Council, the following members were present:

Mayor Elizabeth Olson

Durwin Tomperi

Mike Netland

Jody Bjornson

Dan Warmbold

c. Pledge of Allegiance

d. Employee Recognition

The City Council implemented an Employee Recognition Program which was discussed and acted on at the February 26, 2024 Work Session Meeting. The City voted to formally recognize the City employees for their dedication and service with Certificates being given to all employees with five (5) or more years of continuous service and would be provided a Certificate of Appreciation that would be given in 5-year increments. This recognition shall be a yearly award moving forward. Twenty-two (22) employees (Fire Dept., Police Dept., Liquor Store, and Public Works) received the Certificate of Appreciation, which were handed out by Mayor Olson and congratulated by all the Council members, in alphabetical order as follows: **Fire Department** - Thomas Becker - 10; Justen Berttunen - 5; Randy Berttunen - 35 plus; Terry Berttunen - 35; Zachary Berttunen - 5 plus; James Day - 25 plus; Aaron Hillukka - 15 plus; Travis Hunter - 10; Eli Jettmann - 10 plus; Tegan Kako - 5 plus; David Kicker - 25 plus; Troy Mayer - 20; Quade Mayer - 20; Keith Waaraniemi - 5; Robert Weaver - 5 plus; Joshua Whirley - 10 plus; and Brady Wikman 5 plus years. **Liquor Store** - Scott Nordback - 5 plus; and Rachael Pietila - 10 plus years; **Public Works** - Ralph Cox, Jr. - 5 plus; and Ron Yliniemi - 5 plus years; **Police Department** - Derek Huotari - 5 plus years. Congratulations to all the recipients.

e. Department Reports

- **Police – Amy Lane**

1. Monthly Report

Chief Lane reported that the department had 186 calls from February 22nd to March 21st. Lane stated that it was a remarkably busy month. Lane stated that she had applied for two grants for \$5000 each and had sent out twenty-five letters asking for donations for the department’s equipment fund, she had received \$300.

Lane discussed her exempt status as a salaried Police Chief which she stated only applied if she had two full-time officers, and since Joe White is part-time, she would be eligible to receive overtime. Lane asked if Joe White could return to full-time as 2024 funding was available with the State Aid money that the City had received. The Council discussed the matter and agreed to hire Joe White full-time as of May 1, 2024.

Lane mentioned that there are used squad cars available through Chicago Motors in the \$20,000 to \$25,000 range. The Council felt that there were monies available for both a used squad and Officer White from the State Aid monies. Mike Netland voiced concern over what happens for the 2025 budget and beyond.

Main Motion: To approve Chief Lane to purchase a used squad car from Chicago Motors not to exceed \$25,000.

Moved by:	Bjornson
Seconded by:	Tomperi
Action:	Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote
In favor:	Olson, Tomperi, Netland, Bjornson, Warmbold
Opposed:	None

Main Motion: To approve the hiring of Officer Joe White as a Full-Time Officer effective May 1, 2024.

Moved by:	Bjornson
Seconded by:	Warmbold
Action:	Motion carried by a 4-1 voice vote
In favor:	Olson, Tomperi, Bjornson, Warmbold
Opposed:	Netland

Public Works/Streets - Ronald Yliniemi

1. Monthly Report

Ron Yliniemi provided the Council with a copy of the Monthly Public Utilities Report for February 2024. This report showed the lab results and total flow, the City’s water tested out below the minimum requirements.

The use of fluoride was discussed and whether the City should be adding it to the water. A Minnesota Department of Health Drinking Water Standards for Contaminants was provided.

A report showing the water tower paint was provided showing the results of the water tower paint inspection.

Yliniemi reported that the pier will be turned straight the beginning to mid-April and that he was waiting for the frost to come out of the gravel roadways before grading and chloride being applied.

Yliniemi discussed the need for implementing a procedure to shut-off water customers for non-payment. Currently the City does not shut-off water customers but send past due bills to Wadena County for collection with the landowner's property taxes. The Council asked that a policy be written up and brought back for approval.

Yliniemi also asked if he could look for a used pickup for the Water & Sewer Department. Yliniemi stated that there was money in the 2024 Budget for the purchase. The Council asked him to get more information and bring it back for consideration.

- **Liquor Store – Heather Shepersky**

1. Monthly Report – Heather Shepersky was not available, but the Council felt they had adequate information in the reports she provided.

- **Greenwood Connections – Laura Ahlf**

1. Monthly Report

Administrator Laura Ahlf provided the Council with her monthly report with a net profit for the year through February 2024 of \$137,246.18. Ahlf stated that \$40,000 of the net income was from interest received on a CD. Ahlf reported the census today was sixty, with a census of 82% for January and 84% for February.

Ahlf mentioned that 2025 will be the 60th Anniversary for the facility and they are planning for the event.

Ahlf asked if anything had been done with a lease agreement for GWC. Interim City Clerk Jensine Kurtti stated that she was not aware of it as she was gone but would check on it and report back.

Ahlf had not been able to get a second quote for the Woodside Manor Sprinkler System.

The updating of the City Ordinance for GWC was discussed and a meeting will be held on April 5th to review and discuss any necessary changes, if needed.

Main Motion: To approve the Monthly Report and Financials, as presented by GWC Administrator Laura Ahlf.

Moved by:	Warmbold
Seconded by:	Netland
Action:	Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote
In favor:	Olson, Tomperi, Netland, Bjornson, Warmbold
Opposed:	None

- **Park/Beach/Mowing/Bldg Maintenance - Ralph Cox**

1. Succession Planning

Ralph Cox had submitted a letter to the Council regarding the staffing of the City Campground once he retires at the end of the 2024 camping season. Cox felt that Public Works Employee Soukup would be a good fit, as he fills in for Cox when he takes time off. The Council will consider this when they are required to fill the position.

2. Extended Stay Rates at Campground

Ralph Cox would like to offer rates for 2-week, 3-week, and monthly rates. Currently the city only has daily and weekly rates. The Council asked Cox to meet with City Staff and come back with a proposal for them to consider.

Cox was also asked about getting the concrete sidewalk at the Liquor Store completed before June 15th. Cox assured the Council that it would be taken care of.

- **Fire – Dave Kicker**

1. Monthly Report – Chief Kicker did not attend.

Assistant Chief Jim Day presented the Council with Fire Dept. calls for February and March. When asked a question about the calls, Day realized that they needed to update the sheets and would provide a corrected sheet.

Day mentioned some maintenance issues in the fire hall that he felt needed to be addressed whereby Ralph Cox agreed he would address the issues.

Day wanted to know when the Fire Dept. Budget Meeting will be held. He was told May 10th at 1 pm was the first 2025 Council Budget Meeting.

Day mentioned that the Fire Dept. would like to build an addition to the Fire Hall. Day asked when the Fire Contract's with the Townships will be completed, and he stated that they will have to change.

Day wondered about the computer server room and if it will be blocked off so that the firemen can use it for their pancake feed in October. Kurtti stated that she had

spoken with Travis Floyd from WCTA, and they will come up with a way of securing the area.

- **Administration – Jensine Kurtti**

1. Monthly Report – February Budget YTD Rev-Exp, Check Reconciliation, Cash Investments

Kurtti provided the monthly financials to the Council.

2. Catholic Charities Central MN Foster Grandparents Program regarding the National Service Recognition Day: April 2, 2024.

3. Security Cameras for City Hall Front Parking Lot

Kurtti brought forward the question of whether the city should have another security camera installed at the City Hall front parking lot. Currently only the entry portion is covered. The council asked Kurtti to contact WCTA and bring back the information.

4. West Central Telephone Community Cameras

WCTA has offered to install community cameras in Menahga. The proposed locations would be Spirit Lake and a Downtown view. Other communities that have them installed are Wolf Lake and Staples Dower Lake. The Council felt it would be a good way to promote the community. There will be minimal, if any, cost to the City.

Main Motion: To approve the installation of community cameras in Menahga, as requested by WCTA.

Moved by:	Tomperi
Seconded by:	Bjornson
Action:	Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote
In favor:	Olson, Tomperi, Warmbold, Bjornson, Netland
Opposed:	None

f. New Business

1. Re-assessment of Special Assessment Discussion

The City had several City parcels that were tax-forfeited, and Wadena County then placed the outstanding special assessments in deferred assessment status. The next step was that the special assessments were cancelled when they were sent to the State of Minnesota to be auctioned and placed for sale. Minnesota Statute 429.071 allows the City to reassess the parcels for the special assessments by

having a reassessment hearing in the same manner as the original special assessment hearing. This reassessment was not done prior to or at the time these tax-forfeited properties were returned to private ownership. After the discovery that these special assessments (total of \$86,923.57) were still in a “deferred status” with Wadena County, the City would have to decide how to proceed.

The parcels effected are as follows: #17-610-0100 for \$1,877.99; #17-620-0270 for \$1,996.68; #17-630-0090 for \$11,580.95; #17-630-0100 for \$11,580.95; #17-022-1100(1) for \$12,532.46; #17-022-1100(2) for \$9,190.48; #17-460-0080 for \$4,956.04; #17-720-0010 for \$5,534.67; #17-720-0020 for \$5,534.67, #17-720-0030 for \$5,534.67; #17-720-0040 for \$5,534.67; #17-720-0050 for \$5,534.67; #17-720-0060 for \$5,534.67; for a total of \$86,923.57.

NOTE: On November 27, 2023, a reassessment hearing was held, after the property owners addressed their concerns, the reassessment failed at the Council level.

The City Attorney was then asked how the City could proceed with the City Attorney informing the Council that the City had three options:

Option One – Do not try and recover any monies from the deferred assessments, write them off. Option Two – Have a reassessment hearing involving the City Engineer and City Attorney. Option Three – Negotiate an amount with the affected parties. The Council discussed that due to the unknown cost of litigation with the property owners, it decided to go with Option One and write them off.

Main Motion: To approve Option One (Do not try and recover any monies from the deferred assessments, write them off).

Moved by:	Tomperi
Seconded by:	Bjornson
Action:	Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote
In favor:	Olson, Tomperi, Warmbold, Bjornson, Netland
Opposed:	None

2. Transfers from Departments to General Fund 2023

Interim Deputy Clerk Alvina Kytta is asking for approval to make the following transfers from the Liquor Store and Water & Sewer Departments to the City’s General Fund for 2023. The total transfers will be \$90,000, which will come from the Liquor Store (off-sale) \$32,500, and \$32,500 (on-sale). Water \$15,000 and Sewer \$10,000. The Liquor Store contributes to the General Fund regularly, and the Water and Sewer transfers are to cover the administrative costs associated with the department.

Main Motion: To approve the transfers from the Liquor Store (\$65,000) and the Water (\$15,000) & Sewer (\$10,000) Departments to the City's General Fund for 2023.

Moved by:	Netland
Seconded by:	Tomperi
Action:	Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote
In favor:	Olson, Tomperi, Warmbold, Bjornson, Netland
Opposed:	None

3. Personnel Representatives Compensation Review and Recommendation

At the March 11, 2024 Council Meeting, Council Member Durwin Tomperi suggested that the Personnel Representatives (Liz Olson and Mike Netland) review the Interim Clerk/Treasurer's compensation and come back with a recommendation to the full Council. At that meeting Council member Jody Bjornson suggested that an Employee Evaluation may be needed for Interim Employees.

The Council was provided with the 2024 pay scale for the Clerk/Treasurer position maximum of \$48.68/hour and full benefits. The Personnel Representatives considered that the previous temporary employees in that position were paid at a rate of \$45-\$55/hour. Kurtti is currently receiving \$35/hour and has no health benefits. The recommendation was to pay Kurtti \$45/hour, with paid holidays, as well as reinstating the duties of Responsible Authority, Zoning Administrator, authorized signer on all accounts effective 3-11-24. NOTE: (Deputy Clerk Kytta's compensation is \$36/hour and no benefits). The recommendation was to provide paid holidays to Kytta as well. The Personnel Policy does not provide for Evaluations for Interim positions with the City. Also, attached were the Minutes from July 31, 2023 when Jensine Kurtti was approved for the Interim City Clerk/Treasurer position. At that time, Kurtti's wage was approved at \$35/hour based on Kurtti and Consultant Betty Thomsen performing all duties listed on the Clerk/Treasurer job description.

Main Motion: To approve the Interim Clerk/Treasurer wage at \$45/hour effective 3-11-24 and reinstating all prior duties, including but not limited to Responsible Authority, Zoning Administrator, authorized signer on all accounts and necessary documents, and to include the benefit of paid holidays. Recommended a benefit of paid holidays for Interim Deputy Clerk Alvina Kytta and to deny employee evaluations for Interim positions.

Moved by:	Tomperi
Seconded by:	Netland
Action:	Motion carried by a 4-1 voice vote
In favor:	Olson, Tomperi, Warmbold, Netland
Opposed:	Bjornson

g. Consideration of Bills

The Council was provided with the actual invoices for Batch #031924PAY and Batch #032524PAY. No questions were asked.

Main Motion: To approve Batch #031924PAY - \$1,840.41 and Batch #032524PAY - \$57,943.23 for a total of \$59,783.64.

Moved by:	Netland
Seconded by:	Warmbold
Action:	Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote
In favor:	Olson, Tomperi, Warmbold, Bjornson, Netland
Opposed:	None

h. Adjournment

Main Motion: To adjourn at 8:04 pm

Moved by:	Netland
Seconded by:	Warmbold
Action:	Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote
In favor:	Olson, Tomperi, Warmbold, Bjornson, Netland
Opposed:	None

Jensine Kurtti, Interim Clerk/Treasurer

Mayor Elizabeth Olson