

City of Menahga
Special Meeting/Work Session City Council Minutes
Monday, September 25, 2023

A. Call to Order

The Menahga City Council held a Special Meeting/Work Session Meeting Monday, September 25, 2023.

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
Dan Warmbold	Jody Bjornson	

Office Staff present: Interim City Clerk/Treasurer - Jensine Kurtti
Consultant – Betty Thomsen

C. Pledge of Allegiance

D. Department Reports

- **Police Department – Chief Amy Lane**

- 1. Monthly Report**

Chief Lane reported that there were 184 calls from August 24, 2023 to September 20, 2023. Five (5) citations were written, and one (1) DUI Arrest were issued during that time. She reported that she also assisted the Menahga Public School with Safety Training.

Chief Lane discussed the Administrative Tickets process for nuisance violations and traffic tickets and the need for having two Appeal Judges in place, should someone choose to appeal the ticket. Once the citation process is completed with the County and the State, paper tickets will be printed.

- 2. Resolution 2023-33 - \$1,500 Grant**

Chief Lane had applied for a Community Partnerships Grant from the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Foundation. The department had received \$1,500 to support the Menahga Police Departments National Night Out 2024 and other School related events.

Main Motion: To approve Resolution 2023-33 accepting the donation of \$1,500 from the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Foundation.

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

- **Public Works - Ronald Yliniemi, Director**

1. Monthly Report

Ron Yliniemi reported that since the new water tower has been placed into service, the water pressure is up 5 PSI.

The new hydrant by the Menahga Public School skating rink is in and waiting to be installed by Corbin. The school will be paying for the repair due to it not being drained correctly and subsequently froze.

Elsner Well Drilling will be boring a new line for the house on Birch (across from the water tower) that lost their water when the old water tower was torn down. Discussion followed regarding the cost of the new line in the amount of \$4,544.90 being paid from the retainage presently held on the water tower project.

Alum has been ordered to treat the sewer ponds prior to discharge in October. Johnson Jet-Line is currently cleaning out the sewer pipes. Yliniemi reported there were quite a few roots and rags in the pipes.

2. Minnesota Department of Health Report

Yliniemi included a letter from the Minnesota Department of Health regarding the Lead/Copper Tap Water Monitoring Report. Based on the results of the report the City's water system **has not exceeded** the action level for lead and **has not exceeded** the action level for copper. When asked if all notification requirements were completed, including the report to the MDH, Yliniemi stated they were all taken care of and that no further action was needed.

3. Payloader Tires

Yliniemi reported that he had received a quote from Bauer Built on the four tires for the payloader, as requested by the Council. The previous quote was for \$9,940.00. The quote from Bauer Built was \$7,010.36 which reflected a \$600.00 credit being given for the old tires.

Main Motion: To approve the purchase of four (4) tires from Bauer Built Tire & Service in the amount of \$7,010.36.

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

- **Liquor Store – Heather Shepersky**

- 1. Monthly Report**

Heather Shepersky presented the Council with the August 2023 revenue sheet from operations of the on-sale and off-sale. Shepersky did not have the expenses as the August 2023 financial statements were not ready yet. Shepersky has started to input data into the new Point of Sale System, which she hopes to have completed by next month. One of the benefits of the new system will be that the credit card fees will be passed on to the customer.

- **Park/Beach/Mowing/Building Maintenance – Ralph Cox**

Ralph gave the Council an income sheet for 2023 showing a year-to-date total of \$32,519.24. These figures are up significantly over previous years. The Council commended Cox for his efforts.

A large branch of one of the trees at the St Urho Park had broken off and was hanging over the pavilion. Cox felt that if the tree broke any further it may do damage to the pavilion roof. Cox was instructed to obtain quotes to cut down the tree. Cox mentioned that there are a total of three (3) trees by St. Urho that are in dire need to be cut down, one has broken off and has large holes in it. Cox felt that due to the proximity to the pavilion, he would prefer that a professional tree service remove the trees. The Council authorized Cox to call and get a quote on removing the trees.

- 1. Oak Wilt Discussion**

Ralph Cox stated that he was not familiar with Oak Wilt. Cox had been asked to investigate the fact that it seems to exist in some of the City Beach/Park areas. Cox said that the time to deal with it is in the spring and summer.

- 2. Liquor Store Basement**

Cox reported that he had been asked by Liquor Store Manager Heather Shepersky to remove much of the outdated items that are stored in the

basement. Cox was informed that many of these items were a part of the Liquor Store's inventory list and to dispose of them would require that they are declared excess property and then could be sold or destroyed.

3. Long-Term Campsites

Cox asked the Council to consider making long-term campsites available to a group that would like to rent ten (10) to fifteen (15) campsites yearly for their workers that come to do potato inspections. They are currently staying at the campground and are very happy with the facility. These sites would be rented from Mid-August to Mid-October yearly. The Council felt that this is near the end of the normal camping season and should be able to accommodate the request.

Fire – Dave Kicker

1. Monthly Report

Chief Kicker reported that there had been three (3) calls in the last month, and 25 calls for the year.

The Department received a \$2,500 DNR 50/50 Grant that will be used to buy new fire hoses.

Kicker reported that the department would be training on Thursday at the Becker Farms with the Grain Bin Safety Kit that the Department was awarded from AgCountry.

Kicker reminded everyone that The Fire Relief Association will be having a Pancake Feed on October 15th.

- **Administration – Jensine Kurtti**

1. Monthly Report

Kurtti provided the Council with an update of the Administrative Office in the last month. Kurtti stated that the new Administrative Clerk Diane Vry is working out very well. Kurtti stated that she has received several applications for the City Clerk/Treasurer position, but none of the applicants have any municipal experience. She asked how the Council wanted to proceed. A 100-point scoring sheet could be used to score the applicants when the Council decides to do so. Kurtti asked if the Council would like to continue to advertise in the Minneapolis Star & Tribune and the Fargo Forum. The ads are costly and the City has not had much luck from them. The Council decided not to continue at this time but may decide to later. The subject of sharing services with other cities was discussed wherein Kurtti agreed to reach out to other cities and check if there would be any interest.

Kurtti reported that Joe Schoon from the Wadena County Sheriff's Office had indicated that the old Swat Team needed to be disbanded with the existing Agreement being cancelled based on the lack of insurability. The process to complete this matter is being worked on by legal counsel.

2. July 2023 Revenue and Expense Report

Kurtti gave the Council the July 2023 report and stated that the August report would be forthcoming as soon as Alvina Kytta was able to reconcile the Bank Statement and make the necessary corrections on several items.

3. Resolution 2023-34 Greenwood Connections Donations

The City of Menahga owns the Greenwood Connections (GWC) facility and therefore, the City Council must approve all donations for GWC. The GWC Activities Department had received two (2) donations in the last month from the Menahga Gateway Lions for \$250.00 and Cecilia Parkos Memorial for \$280.00.

Main Motion: To approve Resolution 2023-34 accepting the total donations of \$530.00 from the Menahga Gateway Lions and Cecilia Parkos Memorial.

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

4. Carlson SV Audit 2023 performed in 2024

The City of Menahga had been contacted by Carlson SV, LLC regarding the upcoming 2023 Audit (to be performed in 2024). The proposed pricing for the 2023 Audit will go from \$20,000 to \$21,500. The Council felt that the City should continue with Carlson SV, LLC.

Main Motion: To approve the 2023 Audit from Carlson SV, LLC in an amount up to \$21,500.

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

5. Resolution 2023-36 – 2024 Preliminary Levy

Consultant Betty Thomsen presented the Council with an updated budget for 2024. Thomsen stated that she had made the requested adjustments from previous meeting which would now be a 24.15% increase over the 2023 final levy amount. Mike Netland stated that he felt that the City needed to levy funds to build up the unallocated funds of the City. In recent years the unallocated funds had decreased significantly to as low as \$403 in 2021 and \$104,333 in 2022 (due to the sale of the road grader). Netland handed out a spreadsheet that he had prepared showing the tax impact on a \$200,000 taxable value real estate parcel. After much discussion whether the City should levy an additional \$53,337, which would be designated for unallocated funds. Mayor Olson expressed concern over that amount and what an impact it would have on the elderly and low-income residents. The group agreed that something needed to be done with the low reserves.

Main Motion: To approve levying an additional \$53,337 to the proposed tax levy for 2024.

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

The decision was made to add the \$53,337 to the preliminary levy, which levy had to be approved at this meeting due to the September 30th deadline. Betty Thomsen updated the Resolution to reflect the added amount. Thomsen came back with an adjusted preliminary levy amount of \$764,618.27 which was a 41% increase over the previous year.

Main Motion: To adopt Resolution # 2023-36 Adopting the Preliminary 2024 Tax Levy of \$764,618.27.

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

6. Authorized Signers

Since the change in the Administrative Office Staff, the City must update and approve the authorized signers on the City financial accounts. The authorized

signers will now be Mayor Elizabeth Olson, Vice-Mayor Durwin Tomperi, Interim City Clerk/Treasurer Jensine Kurtti and Temporary Deputy Clerk Alvina Kytta.

Main Motion: To approve the addition of Alvina Kytta as an authorized signer as Temporary Deputy Clerk, as well as Mayor Elizabeth Olson, Durwin Tomperi and Jensine Kurtti.

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

E. New Business

1. Preliminary Discussion about ad hoc Designations and Committee Assignments

Council member Jody Bjornson has asked that this discussion item be placed on the agenda. Bjornson seemed to question the designation of Personnel Representatives versus Department Committees. Mayor Olson stated that when it comes to personnel issues, the City must be very careful about what is discussed in public. Bjornson questioned why the full Council was unaware of meetings the Personnel Representatives held with City employees (during their probationary period). Mike Netland stated that he appreciated the time that the representatives had spent with City employees on this matter. Jensine Kurtti presented a copy of an email from the League of Minnesota Cities, that former City Administrator Lacey Erickson had received. It addressed Open Meeting Law (OML) violations that may occur when there are committees. Kurtti gave an example that when there is a committee of two Council members and a department head, there would be an OML violation if the two Council members spoke about the department outside of a meeting. OML occurs when there is a quorum of the committee (two (2) members of a three (3) member committee), not a quorum of the Council which is three (3) members. The possibility of whether to have committees will be discussed during the Council organizational meeting in January 2024.

2. Workplace Culture Improvement

Council Member Jody Bjornson had asked that this discussion item be placed on the agenda. Bjornson remarked that due to the recent resignations of City staff, he felt that the City should find ways to foster a more positive work environment. Bjornson felt that when the Council has questions on invoices, they should ask them outside of Council meetings,

as he felt it had the appearance of being critical. Mike Netland remarked that he felt asking questions of an employee is needed to hold employees accountable, as well as receiving information for the entire Council and the public.

F. Consideration of Bills

- 1. Batch #092523PAY - \$105,265.05**
- 2. Batch #092123 - \$307.02, and**
- 3. CITYUBSEPT - \$374.96**

Discussion followed regarding the payment to the wrong vendor in the prior invoices and in addition, late fees being assessed. This was caused by invoices being found by Temporary Deputy Kytta which had been filed away prior to being paid. Kurtti indicated that late fees should not occur in the future. A couple other invoices were questioned with answers being provided by Kurtti.

Main Motion: To approve Batch #092523PAY - \$105,265.05, Batch #092123PAY - \$307.02, and Batch #CITYUBSEPT – \$374.96 for a total of \$105,947.03.

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

G. Adjournment

Main Motion: To adjourn at 8:49pm

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

Interim City Clerk/Treasurer Jensine Kurtti

Mayor Elizabeth Olson