

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a regular meeting of the Council in and for the City of Albany, Stearns County, Minnesota, was called to order by Mayor Tom Kasner at 6:30 o'clock in the evening on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, in the Council Room at 400 Railroad Avenue for the said City.

Other Council members present were councilors Keith Heitzman, John R. Harlander, Al Amdahl, and Adam Rushmeyer. Other's present were Joseph Mergen, Supervisor, Public Works Department, Jeremy Mathiasen, city engineer with the firm Stantec, Inc., St. Cloud, MN, Police Chief Ozzie Carbajal, Tom Schneider, Interim City Administrator, Gary Winkels, Public Works Department Assistant, Tim Hennagir, Staff Writer with the Star Post, and the following students: Sophia Anderson, Brenda Korneck, and Laney Schmitt.

The council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The council took notice of approval of payment of bills. After due discussion, a motion was made by Adam Rushmeyer and seconded by Keith Heitzman to approve/authorize payroll (3919-3934), electronic payments, transfers, and the payment of the following bills: Check Numbers 73127-73170. All voted for the motion and it carried.

Mayor Tom Kasner called for any corrections or additions to the minutes of the regular meeting of the council held on November 15th and hearing none declared them approved.

Open forum/public comments: none.

Pursuant to due notice, at 6:31 PM, Mayor Tom Kasner called the public hearing into session to consider approving the 2024 Budget and the amount of property taxes being proposed to be collected to pay for the costs of services the city will provide in 2024. Mr. Schneider noted a notice of the public hearing was published in the Star Post on November 22nd and 29th. Mr. Schneider presented to the council the proposed employee benefits, hourly wage increase, revenues, capital equipment fund, and department operations (water, sewer, park, police, street, administration, library, elections, fire). Mr. Schneider noted the 2023 levy was \$1,320,424 and the proposed 2024 levy is \$1,524,701, a \$222,277 increase or 16.83%. Mr. Schneider noted the following budget highlights: 1) 7% debt service levy increase, 2) \$160,000 payment to fund the proposed \$1.6 million-dollar 2024 Roadway Improvements (Mill/Overlay), 3) eight (8%) employee wage increase, 4) a four (4%) increase to water/sewer rates, 5) \$15,000 increase to Park budget for future maintenance, and 6) 2024 Local Government Aid (LGA) increased 79,430. Mr. Schneider informed the council that if the proposed 2023 levy is approved, the 2024 City tax capacity rate is estimated to be 50.33%, a slight increase from the previous year which was 45.20%. Mr. Schneider also noted as residential market values increase, the homestead market value exclusion decreases. Mr. Schneider also noted if the council delays or removes several streets from the proposed 2024 Roadway Improvements, this would reduce the levy. Mr. Mathiasen presented to the council a map of the streets selected by him and Mr. Mergen that need repair (mill/overlay). Mr. Harlander recommended the proposed street improvements be bid in 2024 and include alternates because some of the streets shown on the map have three to four-years of useful surface life remaining. Mr. Harlander also noted if there are any remaining funds levied for the street improvements, a specific reconstruction fund be set aside for future street surface repairs. Mr. Amdahl informed the council he agreed with Mr. Harlander and noted residents have accepted the council's proactive approach to reconstructing aging utilities and roadways. Mr. Mathiasen noted there will be no special assessments because the mill and overlay are considered as surface improvements. Mayor Tom Kasner closed the public hearing at 6:57

PM. Mayor Tom Kasner, with the consensus of the council, directed Mr. Mathiasen to prepare a revised map showing all the proposed streets to be mill and overlayed to include alternates. Mayor Tom Kasner also noted a resolution to approve the 2024 Budget and levy (\$1,524,701) will be presented to the council at the regular council meeting held on Wednesday, December 20th.

Mr. Mathiasen presented to the council a proposed cost estimate for engineering services for the proposed 2024 Roadway Improvements (mill/overlay) but will submit a revised cost estimate knowing the city is considering a bid with alternates.

Mr. Mergen informed the council the hiring committee interviewed five candidates for the position of Public Works Department Assistant on Monday, December 4th; whereby the committee recommended Jeffrey Kociemba, 461 10th Street, Albany, MN. After due discussion, a motion was made by John R. Harlander and seconded by Adam Rushmeyer to approve a conditional job offer to hire Mr. Kociemba at an hourly wage of \$28.00/hour (Group VII-Pay Equity Program) contingent upon the successful completion of a drug/alcohol test, physical examination, and background check. All voted for the motion and it carried. Mr. Mergen noted the first day of employment is proposed to be January 2, 2024, and if a successful 6-month probationary period his wage would increase to \$29.50/hour.

Mr. Mergen also informed the council the school district will be accepting bids on a 2014 80kw standby diesel generator and questioned if the council was interested in the generator. Mr. Mergen noted the generator would be placed at the Albany Business and Industrial Park lift station, 389 Huskie Drive. Mr. Mergen noted bids have to be received on or before December 21st; whereby he will research the generator specifications and lift station electrical controls/motors to make sure each are compatible and will report back to the council at the December 20th council meeting.

Mr. Schneider informed the council that Nathan Ronning's five-year term on the city's Economic Development Authority (EDA) board expires on December 31, 2023. After due discussion, a motion was made by Mayor Tom Kasner and seconded by John R. Harlander to reappoint Nathan Ronning as an EDA board member for a five-year term beginning January 1, 2024. All voted for the motion and it carried.

Mr. Schneider also informed the council the city received an application from Craig Magnus, 204 Golf View Drive, for a five-year term on the Planning Commission board beginning January 1, 2024. Mr. Schneider noted a notice of the vacancy on the board was published in the Star Post on November 22nd and only one application was received. Mr. Schneider recommended to the council Mr. Magnus be appointed to the Planning Commission having knowledge and experience of zoning and permitting regulations. After due discussion, a motion was made by Keith Heitzman and seconded by Al Amdahl to appoint Mr. Magnus as a Planning Commission board member for a five-year term beginning January 1, 2024. All voted for the motion and it carried.

The council took notice of the following bids received to shingle the Albany City Hall, 400 Railroad Avenue that was damaged by a hailstorm in July 2023:

- St. Rosa Lumber, Inc., \$57,192
- Lumber One of Avon \$58,380
- BD Exteriors, Inc. \$81,900

Mr. Schneider noted the work would begin on or after April 1, 2024, and recommended the council approve the low bid and contract for services received from St. Rosa Lumber, Inc. Mr. Schneider also noted the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT), the city's insurance carrier, authorized the approval of the low bid received from St. Rosa Lumber. After due discussion and upon the recommendation by LMCIT, a motion was made by John R. Harlander and seconded by Adam Rushmeyer to approve the low bid and contract for services received from St. Rosa Lumber, Inc. All voted for the motion and it carried.

Mr. Schneider informed the council in April 2022, MJ Electric, Roseville, MN, a subcontractor hired by XCEL Energy, was working on their electrical transmission wire/poles near the city's wastewater treatment plant on County Road 41 whereby as a result of the electrical voltage fluctuations, the city's blower control panel was significantly damaged. Mr. Schneider noted the electrical control panel was repaired with similar components and variable frequency drives (VFD) at a cost of \$43,511. Mr. Schneider noted MJ Electric has offered \$30,000 as a settlement. Mr. Schneider also noted the city already was reimbursed \$25,000 by the League of MN Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT), the city's insurance carrier; whereby the city would receive a percentage of the settlement or \$12,750 if acceptable to the council. After due discussion, a motion was made by Mayor Tom Kasner and seconded by Al Amdahl to accept the \$30,000 settlement offer from MJ Electric. All voted for the motion and it carried.

Mayor Tom Kasner announced the next regular council meeting for 6:30 PM or as soon as thereafter on Wednesday, December 20th and adjourned the meeting at 7:15 PM.

Tom Schneider
Interim City Administrator