

City of Brownsville
Minutes of December 6, 2023 Regular Monthly Council Meeting

The regular monthly meeting of the Brownsville City Council was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mayor Jean Meyer. Council members present were Barb Hurley, Pam Walhovd, and Tim Klug. Also attending were Clerk, Steve Schuldt, Treasurer, Jenna Knight and City Maintenance Dean Twite and Brandon Frank, Brownsville F.D. Guests in attendance were Rose Korabek with the Caledonia Argus, William Fitzpatrick, Jim Hakes, Allen Whitesitt, Sylvan Fix and Marcus Weichert with Minnesota Rural Water Association.

Mayor Meyer convened a closed session of council members for discussion of filling the vacant council position.

At 7:12 pm Jean Meyer reconvened the regular meeting of the city council. Roll call of council was taken with a quorum being present. Jean Meyer declared that William Fitzpatrick was appointed to fill the council vacancy. Ms. Meyer administered the oath of office to Mr. Fitzpatrick and welcomed him to the council table to begin his appointment as a council member.

At 7:15 pm the Truth-in-Taxation meeting was convened. Sylvan Fix questioned the difference in valuation of his two properties, one with an older house on 5 acres and the other with a newer house on 24 acres. He also questioned the decrease in homestead market valuation exclusion. It was explained that this meeting dealt with the proposed tax levy and not with property values. He was referred to the county assessor for an explanation of his property values. Allen Whitesitt questioned his homestead exclusion also and was referred to the county assessor for an explanation. There being no further questions relating to truth in taxation, Pam Walhovd moved, seconded Barb Hurley and the motion passed to adjourn the Truth in Taxation meeting at 7:21 pm.

CONSENT AGENDA: Council reviewed the consent agenda which includes the agenda for today's meeting, the minutes of November 1, 2023 and claims payable. Pam Walhovd requested that the November 1, 2023 minutes clarify that the Brownsville City Council and Brownsville/Crooked Creek Townships combined meeting be held separately from the regular city council meeting. Tim Klug moved, seconded Barb Hurley and the motion passed to approve the consent agenda. Additionally, Jean Meyer informed council that Marcus Weichert Minnesota Rural Water Association (MRWA) will be an addition to New Business (a) to discuss opportunities available through MRWA.

FLOOR CORRESPONDENCE: None.

PRESENTATIONS: None

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: Jean Meyer introduced Marcus Weichert to inform council of opportunities available through the MRWA. Mr. Weichert explained that MRWA services are free and deals with all issues dealing with water, including funding assistance. Funding for Mr. Weichert's services are provided through USDA. Pam Walhovd moved, seconded by Bill Fitzpatrick and the motion passed to approve the services of Mr. Weichert.

MAINTENANCE REPORT: Dean Twite presented a prepared written maintenance summary which is attached hereto and made a part of these minutes. Mr. Twite verbally reviewed the report with council members. Council members questioned affluent spreading at Ideker's farm, whether it is incorporated or surface spread. There was discussion about the payment of \$600.00 to Ideker for applying the affluent on his field and noted that the payment to Ideker was for him to incorporate into the soil which is now performed by A-1 Precision Pumping. Council was also informed that there is additional nearby farmland available to receive affluent. Council discussed lighted holiday banners and requested that the city inquire about the cost to install electrical outlets on poles for plugging in lighted displays. Council was reminded that any city improvements in or along County Highway 18 need to be submitted to Houston County before spring.

FIRE/RESCUE DEPARTMENT: Brandon Frank reported that a contract has been signed with Crooked Creek Township for providing emergency services. Mr. Frank reported that Brownsville Township's fire district population has been determined using Houston County census data and he is waiting for 2023 call volume to complete the formulation to determine Brownsville Township's cost for emergency protective services. Mr. Frank reported that turn-out gear will be ordered shortly and is to be paid for by a \$37,000.00 grant. Total cost of the gear is \$37,600.41 with the \$600.41 cost overrun being paid from the fire department's budget. Mr. Frank shared the fire department's 10 year comprehensive plan for acquisitions. Mr. Frank requested that the council consider replacing their current hydraulic extraction

tool with a new battery powered unit costing \$15,000.00. He suggested that the extraction tool cost is an eligible use of Public Safety Aid totaling \$24,725.00 being distributed to the city December 26, 2023. Council members discussed other possible uses of the Public Safety Aid such as intervention and prevention programs. Barb Hurley moved, second by Pam Walhovd and the motion passed to table any discussion for use of Public Safety Aid until other qualifying uses can be considered, possibly youth programs. Council questioned if surveillance cameras at the ballpark is an eligible use of funds. Council discussed fire department mutual aid payments to other fire departments and whether Brownsville should be billing for mutual aid. It was explained that local fire departments other than Caledonia's Rural Fire Association did not charge each other for mutual aid. No action was taken. Mr. Frank explained that a second AED unit is needed due to one of their two units failing at a scene. Jenna Knight suggested using an extra AED unit that was formerly at the ballpark and returned to the office during the winter. The unit will be turned over to the fire department after testing. Mr. Frank continued to review the fire department's ten year comprehensive plan for equipment replacement with particular attention to existing SCBA Packs which have exceeded their expected life cycle. Mr. Frank further explained that in past years, there was no provision for equipment replacement and the department is facing a great deal of expense in order to provide their services and provide the necessary equipment needed keep to personnel safe. Council suggested getting trained to become wildfire certified to be eligible for additional services and revenue. Council questioned if volume purchasing by combining the needs of several fire departments would save additional money. Pam Walhovd questioned fund raising, particularly gambling revenue and if a gambling license should be applied for. It was explained that Friends of the Brownsville Fire Department is an organization that can apply for a gambling license after being in existence for 3 years. They would then need to have a gambling site. Barb Hurley questioned where the Brownsville Lions annual donation of \$1,000 to the fire department is going. Jenna Knight stated that it was not paid to the city.

CITY CLERK: Steve Schuldt presented council with budget reports for certification of real estate taxes payable in 2024. The amount to be certified will be \$133,910.00 for general fund and \$25,000.00 for Maintenance Building debt service, for a total levy of \$158,910.00. Council members expressed concern for other fund balances such as sewer that need more revenue. It was explained that the other fund accounts receive their own revenue from monthly utility billing and do not receive tax dollars to operate. It was noted that sewer operations will need a rate increase to operate sustainably. Barb Hurley moved, seconded by Pam Walhovd and the motion passed to approve the levy of \$158,910.00. Council Member Fitzpatrick abstained due to his not being involved in the budgeting process prior to this meeting.

Jenna Knight presented council with tobacco license renewals from River Station, Wildcat Saloon and Lawrence Lake Marina. Barb Hurley moved, second by Pam Walhovd and the motion passed to approve the renewals.

Council reviewed a letter from the Houston County Assessor whether to hold a Local Board of Appeal and Equalization meeting in Brownsville or to defer appeals to the County Board of Appeal and Equalization. Pam Walhovd expressed that it was important for the council to be involved in the appeals process. It was noted that four of the council members are trained and certified for the appeals process. Council commented about how informative and helpful the LBAE meeting is to everyone. Barb Hurley moved, seconded by Tim Klug and motion passed to continue with the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization meeting for 2024.

Council was asked if a special gym rate could be negotiated for a three hour long real estate auction taking place in February. Council members concluded that a special rate would be unfair to residents who pay more for use of the gym on a daily basis. Council agreed by consensus that the front room is available for \$50.00 and if additional space is needed, the council room can be rented for an additional \$50.00.


Council was informed that a DEED Grant application for \$550,000 to make sewer updates has been submitted and was received by the deadline.

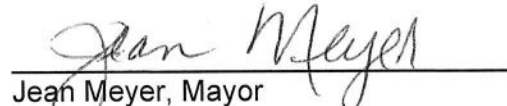
Council was informed that Brownsville Township will be billed \$5,000 for emergency protective services for 2024. Council discussed Brownsville Township's charge for use of the council room for meetings at \$25.00 per meeting rather than the advertised fee of \$40.00 per meeting. Council agreed by consensus that the Township is to be billed at the prevailing rate for meetings in the council room in the future.

Council was informed that sidewalks are not being maintained by property owners after snow and ice events. Council discussed what charges need to be levied for the city to clear sidewalks. The matter is to be discussed further at the January 2024 meeting.

Dean Twite informed council that John Holzwarth will be retiring on June 27, 2024 and council will need to look ahead to find a replacement.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, Pam Walhoved moved, second by Barb Hurley and the motion passed to adjourn at 9:17 pm.


Steve Schuldt, Clerk


Jean Meyer, Mayor

