

**Regular Meeting Ely City Council – City Hall, Council Chambers
December 5, 2023 - Minutes**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Omerza called the meeting to order at 5:30pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

PRESENT: Council members A.Forsman, Kess, Debeltz, Callen, Bisbee, and Mayor Omerza

ABSENT: Council Member Campbell

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Debeltz/Bisbee moved to approve the minutes from the November 21, 2023 Regular Council Meeting. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

ADDITIONS OR OMISSIONS TO AGENDA:

A. Additions 8.A Ely Utilities Commission

B. Additions 13.F. League of Minnesota Cities Liability Coverage Waiver Form – Does not Waive

C. Additions 13.H Anthony Bermel – Request to cut dead cedar trees for firewood

D. Additions 13.G Discussion on short term rental licensing limits

Kess/Callen moved to approve adding the Additions A-D. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

Mayor Omerza reminded everyone that the Joint Powers Legislative Lunch is on December 11th at 11am at the Grand Ely Lodge. If anyone has any topics, they would like to discuss please let Mayor Omerza or the Clerk's office know.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Callen/Debeltz moved to waive readings in entirety of all ordinances and resolutions on tonight's agenda. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

REQUESTS TO APPEAR:

Well Being Development Presentation on Community Based Recovery Program Project – Deanna Swansen and Beth Chapman

Well Being Development is a Community non-profit program founded in 2010 by community members that saw friends and family who were struggling with chronic mental illness and substance misuse which is often referred to as behavioral health needs. They want all people in Ely to live their best lives. In March, Well Being Development was awarded funding through St. Louis County's Opioid Settlement Funds. Their plan is a Community-Based Recovery Program. Based on evidence of effective treatment and commitment to a holistic approach that puts the person at the center of the care model, we have begun to put together a plan to build a Recovery Program. Listening to early guidance from the community through surveys and interviews has been an important part of our process. At the center of our programming is Recovery Residence Housing with co-located services. A needs assessment conducted by St. Louis County has identified housing as a major gap in the recovery model. Our plan is to provide safe, stable housing with built-in connections to services that support individuals on their recovery journey right here in their own community. Co-located services, designed to complement clinical services such as outpatient chemical dependency treatment and medication assisted treatment (MAT), may include: care facilitation, support groups, peer recovery support specialists, access to technology for telehealth appointments,

and Northern Lights Clubhouse to reduce social isolation. Recovery Housing with a person-centered holistic approach has evidence that it is effective in reducing the impact of substance misuse and addiction. A person centered holistic Recovery Residence with co-located services would include serving individuals from the Ely who have under gone treatment and maintained abstinence for 30+ days, abstinence based network of support, house manager with peer recovery support specialist training, rent paid by tenants which means self-funded and self-sustaining, written policies and procedures based on National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) standards, resident participation in household meetings, chores, and maintenance, Co-located services in home: care facilitation, peer recovery support specialist, support groups, Northern Lights Clubhouse and close ties to other community partners: food, employment, transportation services, physical and mental health services. They are just asking for support of the project and if anyone has further questions, they are having a community information session on Tuesday, December 12th at 5:30pm at the Ely Senior Center, they will be having more of these community information sessions so the community can become more involved in this program and to fight the stigma of mental health and addiction. They indicated that the house will not be operational until next year around this time. The Council expressed their appreciation for putting this together for the community.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Standing/Special

Planning and Zoning Commission

A.Forsman/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from Planning and Zoning to direct Attorney Klun to provide Planning and Zoning Commissioners with education. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Callen/ Kess moved to approve the recommendation from Planning and Zoning for the city council to instruct planning and zoning to work on the land use comprehensive plan. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Heritage Preservation Commission – Minutes included in the Council Packet

Telecommunications Advisory Board (TAB)

Debeltz/Bisbee moved to approve the recommendation from TAB to approve the purchase not to exceed \$7000 for a new video board.

Langowski indicated that this is for the conversion to HD and will allow for all features to be utilized and will include the capabilities for additional cameras.

A.Forsman asked where the TAB Budget comes from.

Langowski stated that it comes from the Midco Franchise Fees which pays for all the equipment and filming of the meetings.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Tree Board:

Bisbee indicated that in 2024 it will be 10 years of being Tree City USA.

Donald G Gardner Humanities Trust

Debeltz/A.Forsman moved to accept Pam Ranson's resignation from the Gardner Trust Board. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Ely Utilities Commission (EUC)

A.Forsman/Callen moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to move forward with the Hourly Fee Schedule from AE2S for their services on the optimization projects at the Water Treatment Plant, not to exceed \$7500 without written authorization, plus reimbursement for all project related expenses. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

A.Forsman/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to approve \$22,500 for the EUC portion of the mini excavator purchase from L & L Rental. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

A.Forsman/Bisbee moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to direct Attorney Klun to review the contract with Boss Agricultural, Inc for hauling liquid biosolids that would allow for a 90 day notice to cancel the contract. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

A.Forsman/Callen moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to approve \$316,330.66 payment of the October EUC bills. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

A.Forsman/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to pay both invoices to AMPTEK, \$1,369.76 for the sludge press connection at the Wastewater Treatment Facility and \$5,585.00 for flow meter wiring at the Water Treatment Plant. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

A.Forsman/Bisbee moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to pay AE2S \$10,818.90 for the WWTF Improvements Project. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

A.Forsman/Callen moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to pay Rice Lake Construction Group for Pay Application #16 for \$275,550.22 for the WWTF Improvements Project.

Kess asked what percentage of the project is completed. Langowski indicated that it is substantially completed, we are just going through the checklists.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

A.Forsman/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to pay Shane Stevens “ The Beaver Guy” \$1,910.00 for nuisance beaver control.

Langowski indicated that we have over 25,000 feet of waterline that comes from Burntside Lake. We have issues with the beaver’s building dams and such along the swamps and by the bridges that holds the waterline.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

A.Forsman/Debeltz moved to recess the meeting at 6:02pm for the Truth in Taxation Meeting. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Mayor Omerza reconvened the council meeting at 6:23pm.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

Clerk-Treasurer

Fire Chief

Chief Marshall discussed the recent calls for the fire department. Chief Marshall indicated that we have seen an increase in mental health calls, a little kindness and compassion can go along way.

Library Director

Library Director Heinrich discussed the current programming at the library which can be found on the library website.

Police Chief

Police Recruitment Retention

Chief Houde presented a PowerPoint to the council on the Recruitment and Retention Proposal. Over the last few years Law Enforcement agencies all over Minnesota and nationwide have been overwhelmed with staffing shortages as overall interest in profession has decreased, creating a major hiring crisis. Minnesota has 10,625 licensed Peace Officers and 418 different Law Enforcement Agencies as of 2022. As of December 5, 2023 there were 201 different police agencies in MN with job postings on the MN POST website, including 8 on the Iron Range that are currently hiring. With fewer law enforcement candidates out there, many MN agencies are competing against each other for applicants. Many smaller agencies struggle to compete with larger departments and agencies near the Twin Cities that have increased their wages and benefits. Ely, like many other smaller departments have struggled to retain their current officers and attract new officers for the open positions as a result of this. Many agencies have gotten creative with recruiting by increasing wages and benefits, tuition reimbursements, Officer Wellness Programs, and recruitment bonuses. Ely received \$140,427 in Public Safety aid which can be used in the areas of police, fire, or emergency management. One way this funding can be used is for retention or hiring bonuses. Chief Houde requested to earmark approximately \$30,000 of Ely's Public Safety Aid to create a recruitment and retention incentive program. The program will include upon hire, each officer will receive a Kevlar Canoe along with two paddles and two life jackets to explore the Ely area. Each current fulltime Police Department employee will also receive a canoe. The canoe package is valued at \$3,800 and will be purchased from Ely retailers. Officers that leave employment prior to three years of service will pay back all or a portion of the \$3,800 canoe package – worked 0-12 months \$3,800.00, worked 12-24 months \$2533.00 and 12-36 months \$1,267.00. Current fulltime police department employees will be ordered a canoe upon council approval of the incentive plan. If the current employee leaves employment from the City of Ely prior to three years of continued service from 1/1/2024 then the employee will be required to pay back all or portion of the \$3,800 canoe package at the same proration of new employees.

Debeltz/Kess moved to approve the Recruitment and Retention incentive package by using \$30,000 of the Public Safety Aid and purchasing a new canoe, 2 paddles, and 2 life jackets for all new and current fulltime police department employees, with the stipulation that if the employee leaves within the 3-year period they will have to pay the prorated portion back to the City of Ely.

Bisbee indicated that he likes the creativity and that it stands out, it highlights some of Ely's best features and provides opportunity to explore the features. Bisbee indicated that he feels like there could be more done before bringing it up for approval, maybe go through and review some

of the intricacies of the strategy to ensure that when the money is spent wisely and most effectively. With retention being the goal of this, Bisbee indicated that he would like to see more going into it before approval from the marketing aspect.

Houde indicated that he has been working with the Tourism Bureau with this concept and with ways to help with marketing this.

Motion Carried 5-1-1 with Bisbee Voting No and Campbell Absent.

Swearing in Ceremony for new police officer Courtney Olson.

City Attorney

Debeltz/A.Forsman moved to Close the meeting per MN Statute 13D.03 for Strategy for Ely Supervisors of Other than Essential Employees after Open Forum. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

City Engineer

COMMUNICATIONS: Matter of Information

Ely Bloomenson Community Hospital – The Pulse – November 2023

North St Louis Soil & Water Conservation District Open House December 13, 2023

Correspondence from Northern Lakes Arts Association

Correspondence from the Department of Health regarding the Lead/Copper Tap Water Monitoring Report

CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT:

A. City and EUC Claims for December 5th, 2023 for \$236,069.29

B. Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails 2024 Membership dues for \$165.00.

Callen/Debeltz moved to approve claims for payment items A and B. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

OLD BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

Kess/Callen moved to approve the Letter of Support from the City of Ely for Commissioner Jugovich to be on the LCCMR Board. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Kess/Debeltz moved to approve Resolution 2023-032 A Resolution Designating Polling Precinct Location for the City of Ely. Roll Called: Council Members A.Forsman – Yes, Kess- Yes, Debeltz – Yes, Callen – Yes, Campbell – Absent, Bisbee – Yes, and Mayor Omerza – Yes. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Debeltz/Bisbee moved to advertise for Open Committee Seats that the term limits will be expiring or coming due in January 31, 2024.

Langowski indicated that we will post all positions that are open in the Ely Echo, posted at City Hall and on the City Website. The way the city committee seats are appointed is in our city code book and in the charter. If anyone is interested in what certain committees do it is in Section 2 in the City Code.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Kess/Bisbee moved to cancel the December 2023 Study Session. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Debeltz/A.Forsman moved to approve the 2024 Tobacco License renewal applications pending the receipt of all required documentation and payment for the term of 1/1/2024-12/31/2024. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

A.Forsman/Debeltz moved to approve the League of Minnesota Cities Liability Coverage Waiver Form by checking Does not Waive. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Discussion on short term rental licensing limits

Bisbee indicated that we have a limit of 35 Short Term Rentals that is set by Resolution, currently we have 21 that are licensed. Because if the need for long term housing, we should potentially consider reducing the number of short term licensing.

Kess indicated that he would support this as it would open housing for long term.

Langowski indicated that this was set by resolution so we could change it easily in the future if wanted. We could give public notice as to a number that will be allowed, so if there are some that are pending it would give them time to decide what they want to do then we could bring the resolution to the council at the first meeting in January.

Callen asked what number are we proposing? Bisbee indicated possibly 25.

A.Forsman proposed that we advertise that we are looking at changing the number of Short Term Rentals allowed to let people know, then we can update the resolution at the first meeting in January.

Kess indicated that 25 would be a good number.

Omerza indicated that she would like to hear from the public to see the need.

Kess/Debeltz moved to direct the clerk to publish a notice that the City Council is looking at reducing the number of Short Term Rentals per the original resolution and is looking at updating the resolution at the first meeting in January. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell Absent.

Anthony Bermel – Request to cut dead cedar trees for firewood

Langowski indicated that he met with Anthony Bermel yesterday at the area of 5th Ave West by the new trailhead area. Bermel is requesting permission to cut down some dead cedar trees along the right of way by the new trailhead area on the west end of town. The only request would to have Bermel sign a release of liability and make sure he uses safety precautions.

Debeltz/Bisbee moved to allow Anthony Bermel to cut the dead cedar trees along 5th Ave West by the new trailhead and to sign a release of liability and use safety precautions. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with Campbell absent.

OPEN FORUM:

Mayor Omerza recessed the meeting at 7:11pm.

Mayor Omerza reconvened the meeting in Closed session per MN Statute 13D.03 for Strategy for Ely Supervisors of Other than Essential Employees at 7:20pm.

ADJOURN:

Mayor Omerza adjourned the meeting at 8:05pm without objection.

Casey Velcheff
Deputy Clerk