

**Regular Meeting Ely City Council – City Hall, Council Chambers  
May 21, 2024 – Minutes**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Omerza called the council meeting to order at 5:30pm.

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

ABSENT: None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**Debeltz/Callen moved to approve minutes from the May 7, 2024 Regular Council Meeting. Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**ADDITIONS OR OMISSIONS TO AGENDA:**

**Campbell/Calen moved to add Additions 8.A Budget Committee. Motion Carried Unanimously**

**MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Mayor Omerza thanked the Police Department for getting the word out that the smoke in the air this last Sunday was from the Canada Fires. Chief Houde indicated to never assume that the smoke is from somewhere else, we did have a grass fire that afternoon in Ely, be aware of what is going on and report any close smoke and fire you may see. Mayor Omerza told people to also check out the Forest Services Facebook page they have a lot of up-to-date information on it.

Mayor Omerza indicated that Little League has started, be aware of the kids around the school and Whiteside Park, also school will be out soon so kids will be out and about more. Be aware of the crosswalks and of more people being in town.

Mayor Omerza congratulated the End of the Road Archers; a couple of the kids continue to move on.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

- A. Motion to waive readings in entirety of all ordinances and resolutions on tonight's agenda.
- B. Hold a Public Hearing on June 18, 2024 from 5-5:30pm to accept public comments for the Water Intake and Burntside Water Main Replacement Project in the Council Chambers at Ely City Hall.

**Debeltz/Bisbee moved to approve the consent agenda items A and B. Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**REQUESTS TO APPEAR:**

Barb Jones – 2011 Pine Tree Trail - Ely 2016 Comprehensive Plan – Ely Climate Group  
Jones indicated that she represents the Ely Climate Group, they have been meeting monthly for several years. They had a speaker from Morris, Minnesota, Tony Goodnough, who spoke on "Sustainability for Small Cities." Morris is an agricultural area with abundant wind energy, they have attracted research, grant and government funding to build a sustainable energy supply and backup storage, established a local food sourcing initiative and cooperative network between county, city, conservation district, schools, and health providers.

Morris is similar to Ely in size, but we have quite different resources. Ely attracts visitors and residents because of its location. Ely has first class wilderness access and outdoor recreation

opportunities in addition to its learning and arts scenes. Jones indicated that we should decide if any of the plans developed and used in Morris are appropriate for Ely. We note that having a plan enables funding. It is the first part of any proposal. Projects in a well-designed plan have a good chance of being done.

Jones stated that another local example of a city planning for its future is Grand Marais. They have a well-developed "Community Vision Plan" and "Climate Action Plans" that are easily found on their city website. The Community Vision Plan is an overview of the planning process, full of beautiful images. The Climate Action Plans are detailed numbers and graphs of progress made. Ely has more in common with Grand Marais than with Morris. They are similar in size with both attracting residents and visitors because of their natural beauty.

Jones stated that Ely has things to brag about too: the new library conforms to the highest energy efficiency and green building standards as will the new trail center. We have excellent infrastructure and organizations, including the State Theater, the Wolf and Bear Centers, the College and Schools, the Hospital and Clinic, the Folk School, museums, many arts organizations, outfitters, restaurants, hotels, winter and summer festivals, trails, and more, all are first rate well supported and successful.

Jones stated that it is time that Ely updated its own long-term plan. The materials from Grand Marais provide a use full example of how to do this.

The Members of the Ely Climate group have shown a lot of enthusiasm for thinking about Ely's potential. We need to plan now for what we need in 10 to 20 years' time. Ely should be considering a development like Oryn Kringstad's "Tower Vision 2025" with energy efficient housing for vacation stays and workforce and senior housing? Should we encourage new light industry for sustainable energy? Should we install more rooftop solar, more EV chargers, more public transportation, more heat pumps and fewer propane tanks? What are the Council's ideas? We need over all aspirational goals, then we need detailed projects. Jones invited everyone to come to the Ely Climate Group meeting on June 11<sup>th</sup>.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Standing/Special

Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC)

Campbell indicated that the Ely High School Centennial Oral History project has been completed. June 26<sup>th</sup> will be the premiere date as part of a history night at the Ely-Winton Historical Society.

Projects Committee

**Callen/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from Projects Committee to approve the submission of an investigation grant to DEED for the Depot Project. Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Budget Committee

**A.Forsman/Kess moved to approve the recommendation from Budget Committee to approve the purchases from EATI for \$22,401.34, Motorola solutions for \$6,433.20 and SHI for \$3,073.65 to outfit the new police squad.**

Chief Houde explained what the purchases are for. The EATI is for the new lights and wiring, taking the old back seat out and putting in the cage. The prices have increases since the last purchase, usually we can use the same equipment in a new car, but they have changed the

model of the cars so it does not fit anymore. The Motorola is to purchase new radio, which we need to update to be federally compliant. The SHI is for a new computer for the squad car.

**Motion Carried Unanimously**

**A.Forsman/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from Budget Committee to direct city staff to come up with a strategy and costs to implement the use of Body Cameras and Squad Cameras.**

Chief Houde explained that we would choose one or the other Body Cameras or Squad Cameras, and Body Cameras would be the preferred to start. Once we start the process, we will need to have public hearings and public comment before they can be purchased.

Debeltz asked if there are any federal programs that can help fund these.

Chief Houde stated that there are and Assistant Chief Lorenz is looking into them.

Forsman stated that the motion is just to look into a plan to move forward. We are not allocating any money at this time, we are just getting ready to be ready.

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**A.Forsman/Callen moved to approve the recommendation from Budget Committee to approve the purchase from Crysteel Truck Equipment for \$168,697 the parts quoted to outfit the new Dump Truck.**

A.Forsman indicated that we are seeing an increase in costs for everything.

Kess indicated that we have started the budget process and it is going to be very tight with all the rising costs.

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**A.Forsman/Campbell moved to approve the recommendation from Budget Committee to direct city staff to work with the league softball and youth leagues utilizing City Fields, on agreement, concerning property use and maintenance expectations.**

A.Forsman indicated that the Softball, Little League, and Girls Softball Fields are on City Property, we provide these fields for the recreation of our citizens and neighboring township citizens. We feel that the participants in these leagues that use these fields should help with the upkeep and maintenance of the fields. We need an agreement with each of these leagues to know where everyone stands, we are providing the property for these to take place, but need everyone to contribute for them for them to stay in proper shape.

Omerza indicated that this will help with the shift in leadership from year to year.

Bisbee stated that Park and Rec have had discussions with Little League, will these agreements come back to Park and Rec for review?

Langowski stated that they will. The plan is to meet up with the groups to discuss the expectations. We need to work as a group to make sure the use of these fields is able to continue.

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**A.Forsman/Bisbee moved to approve the recommendation from Budget Committee to approve the purchase of the Mail Box Cluster for Sibley Court Drive as quoted from mailboxes.com for \$2,565.00, if necessary.**

A.Forsman stated that Bisbee might have an inside track on getting something for a less cost, this is required for the new Sibley Court area. A.Forsman indicated that this is a postal service mandate now, for new cul de sac areas they do not have individual mailboxes on each house.

Bisbee indicated that if the box cluster exists prior to the upgrade then the responsibility falls on the owners of the houses, if it is being added as a new location it is the responsibility us in this case.

**Motion Carried Unanimously**

**A.Forsman/Callen moved to approve the recommendation from Budget Committee to approve the purchase of Barricades as quoted for \$3,386 from Locators and Supplies.**

**Motion Carried Unanimously**

**DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:**

Clerk-Treasurer

Fire Chief

Chief Marshall discussed the current fire and medical calls for the Fire Department. They are in the process of interviewing four new applicants for the Fire Department.

Library Director

Library Director Heinrich discussed the current programming for the Ely Library which can be found on the library website

Police Chief

Chief Houde reminded everyone the last day of school is May 30, and to watch out for kids playing and being more active around town.

Chief Houde stated that we have had some vandalism in the local park. Chief Houde encouraged the parents to talk with there kids, we want the kids to go out and enjoy our parks and facilities, but when you are using the parks and facilities be respectful of them, don't make a mess, don't destroy anything. When these issues damage property and cost the city time and money that is where it is an issue. Please talk to you kids, and be aware of what they are up to. A.Forsman stated that he is appalled at what he has seen around here. A.Forsman stated that yesterday morning two of the public works staff, who should have been out filling potholes had to take time to clean up after some pigs that had defecated on a trash can lids down by the rec center. It is not just money you are costing us; it is also time and having a decent city to live in. A.Forsman stated that there is talk about the comp plan to make the city better, but we have to do better than this. There is no reason for this, you are not only ruining one thing, you are preventing things from getting fixed around town and preventing our Public Works staff from getting the things done that they need to.

Mayor Omerza stated if you see something, everyone has a cell phone, dial 911.

Chief Houde told the public do not hesitate to call 911 if you see something, please call!

Whether it is kids or adults, Houde would like for his officers to go talk to these people. We have had vandalism that has been done by adults. Some of this stuff is appalling, please call if you see anything.

Langowski indicated that over the weekend we had a bag of dirty diapers left at the recycle center. This is one of those reoccurring issues and Langowski agreed with A.Forsman's frustration with what we end up dealing with. All this takes time away from the Public Works staff, we have a small crew, when time is spent cleaning up these types of messes it is taking time away from the work, we need them to do and the other improvements we are doing around the city.

City Attorney

**Callen/Debeltz moved to approve the Mortgage Satisfaction for Madalynne Reese and Kathleen Quigley recorded as Document No. 1058697.0 on July 12, 2022 and the Note and Mortgage for the Residential Rehab loan for Kathy Quigley and Madalynne Reese for \$10,025.78 at 1139 E Washington St to install a moisture barrier in the basement. Motion Carried Unanimously**

**Kess/A.Forsman moved to approve the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of Ordinance No. 377 An Ordinance of the City of Ely, Minnesota Adding to the Ely City Code, Chapter 20, Section 20.1.30, Entitled Zoning Map Amendment.**

Kess indicated that this is for the Old Depot at 212 N Central Ave, changing the zoning from Industrial to Commercial.

**Roll Called: Council members A.Forsman-Yes, Kess- Yes, Debeltz – Yes, Callen-Yes, Campbell- Yes, Bisbee-Yes, Mayor Omerza-Yes. Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**Campbell/Bisbee moved to schedule a public hearing for Ordinance 377 on June 4, 2024 at 5:15pm in the Council Chambers at Ely City Hall. Motion Carried Unanimously**

City Engineer

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Matter of Information

Building and Development Summit for Northeast Minnesota – Energizing Housing Projects on the Iron Range and Surrounding Communities – May 22<sup>nd</sup> Iron Trail Motors Event Center – Virginia, MN

**CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT:**

- A. City and EUC Claims for May 21, 2024 for \$239,426.53
- B. AE2S Invoices: #94633 for WTP Improvements for \$6,631.25, and Invoice #94631 for WWTF Improvements Project for \$4,866.75.
- C. SEH Invoice #466533 for the Prospector ATV Connect Four for \$10,650.00
- D. Pay Estimate #17 for the WWTF Improvements Project for \$77,864.16 payable to Rice Lake Construction Group
- E. Change Order #2 for the 2022 Street Improvements/Spaulding Phase III project which decreases the contract amount by \$99,424.66 and Pay Estimate #6 for \$18,252.11 payable to Utility Systems of America.
- F. Burntside Ridge Trail Association, 2024 Road Dues for \$300.00.

**A.Forsman/Callen moved to approve the Claims for Payment items A-F. Motion Carried Unanimously**

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Debeltz/Campbell moved to approve Resolution 2024-023 Resolution Authorizing Application for Ely Blue Line Club to Apply for Raffle Permit. Roll Called: Council members A.Forsman-Yes, Kess- Yes, Debeltz – Yes, Callen-Yes, Campbell- Yes, Bisbee-Yes, Mayor Omerza-Yes. Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**A.Forsman/Bisbee moved to approve the Temporary Liquor License for the Ely Fire Relief Association for June 29, 2024 in Whiteside Park, July 6, 2024 in Whiteside Park, and July 26-28, 2024 in Whiteside Park. Motion Carried Unanimously**

**Debeltz/Campbell moved to approve the Listing Contract” Exclusive Right to Sell for Keller Williams Classic Realty NW for East Spaulding First Addition, Lot 6, Block 4, contract starts May 31, 2024 and ends on May 31, 2025. Motion Carried Unanimously**

**OPEN FORUM:** None

**ADJOURN:**

Mayor Omerza adjourned the meeting at 6:37pm without objection.

Casey Velcheff  
Deputy Clerk