

**Regular Meeting Ely City Council – City Hall, Council Chambers
December 17, 2024 - Minutes**

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Ely City Council was called to order by Mayor Omerza at 5:30pm in the Council Chambers.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Debeltz/Campbell moved to approve minutes from the December 3, 2024 Public Hearing (Ordinances 381 & 383), December 3, 2024 Public Hearing (Ordinance 378), December 3, 2024 Regular Council Meeting, and December 3, 2024 Truth in Taxation Public Hearing. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

ADDITIONS OR OMISSIONS TO AGENDA:

- A. Additions Committee Reports: Park and Recreation Board
- B. Additions City Attorney: Updated Ordinance 383 adding Temporary Cannabis Events as an Interim Use Permit in Permissible Uses Chart
- C. Additions Claims for Payment: Invoice #99304 to AE2S for the WWTF Improvements Project for 159.00 and Invoice #99306 to AE2S for General Consulting Services for \$4440.00.
- D. Additions New Business: Resolution 2024-048 Resolution Authorizing Application for Ely Arts and Heritage Center to Apply for Raffle Permit

Callen/Debeltz moved to add the additions A-D to the agenda. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

Mayor Omerza indicated that Clerk Langowski and herself went to the Ely Arts and Heritage Meeting. Langowski stated that every year they are getting more and more visitors. They are putting together a capital improvement plan. Langowski discussed how 20 years ago having weddings and an event center at miner's dry was just a thought and now it is happening and has things going on almost every weekend in the summer. They will be doing a mining day this summer like they did last year to promote the space and do fundraising. The Captain's Dry has been vacant for 30+ years and they have raised funds to fix the roof, gutters and have put a lot of labor into that building and hopefully more future funding will come to do more improvements. Langowski indicated that lots of things have happened, but they all take time.

Mayor Omerza stated that the legislative lunch was yesterday at the Grand Ely Lodge. Omerza indicated that Clerk Langowski put together a cut sheet of Ely's Priorities. Kess state that he appreciates all of Langowski's work on our priorities. Omerza indicated that we did not have to explain a lot to our legislatures since they know what is going on in Ely. Campbell stated that it also helps a lot that both of our representatives work across the aisle. Langowski stated that it is great that Roger and Grant both work together. Grant drafted the Housing Bill and was a bit upset that Ely did not get funding or even that more of Greater Minnesota didn't get funding.

Mayor Omerza thanked Councilor Ryan Callen (8 years) and Paul Kess (22 years) for their service to the City of Ely and gave them each a plaque.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A. Motion to waive readings in entirety of all ordinances and resolutions on tonight's agenda.
- B. Approve Council and newly Elected Council members to attend the 2025 Elected Leaders Institute Foundation Program or the 2024 Elected Leaders Institute Advanced Program through the League of Minnesota Cities

Callen/Kess moved to approve the consent agenda items A-B. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

REQUESTS TO APPEAR: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Standing/Special

Ely Utilities Commission (EUC)

Callen/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to purchase a High Lift VFD for the Water Treatment Plant from Revolt Electrical Services for \$18,750.00. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Callen/Campbell moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to purchase of a breaker panel for the Water Treatment Plant from Revolt Electrical Services for \$36,100 plus shipping.

Langowski indicated that the electrical equipment at the Water Plant was installed in 1990. We have to replace the entire panel. We are purchasing all the equipment, then will get it installed at a later time. Currently there is a lot of lead time on electrical equipment, so hopefully we will get all the equipment by Spring and get it installed at that time.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Callen/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to move forward with the \$14,191 AquaPower Bid for the aerator clean out at the Wastewater Treatment Plant in the Spring of 2025.

Langowski indicated that this was part of the project completed in 2000, this is our biological phosphorus removal in the aeration bason which has some built up in the bottom from 25 years. We will need to take this down then they will come in with a vac truck and clean it out, then we will process the material. This will be the first time we clean these out in 25 years.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Callen/Campbell moved to approve the recommendation from the EUC to approve the \$72,549 transformer quote from T&R Electric.

Langowski stated that this will replace our inventory of transformers. Every few years we need to replace our inventory. Transformers are even harder to get and have around a 16-week lead time.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Callen/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to move forward with approving the solar application for 9 E Chapman St pending engineer review approval.

Langowski indicated that a customer is looking at solar and battery storage and would also be able to sell back to us. This project would probably be done next summer.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Callen/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to approve \$14,690 payment to Fergus Power Pump for the biosolids press rental. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent

Callen/Bisbee moved to approve the recommendation from EUC to approve \$500 payment to Mick Shusta for October A Operator Services at the WTP and WWTP. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent

Library Board: Minutes included in the Council Packet

Projects Committee

Callen/Campbell moved to approve the recommendation from Projects Committee to submit a nomination from the City of Ely to ARDC for consideration for funding of a phase 1 and phase 2 environmental review at the Old City Garage.

Langowski indicated that the Old City Garage was built in the early 60's and the area is being considered for redevelopment. All of the old tanks have been removed, but with future development we will need to do a Phase 1 and 2 environmental reviews. ARDC has remaining funds from Brownsfield so we might have the opportunity to do some of these projects through ARDC.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent

Callen/Kess moved to approve the recommendation from Projects Committee to proceed with the ZEF Energy proposal for the DC charging hub at the Trailhead.

Langowski indicated that this will be our second time working with ZEF Energy. Langowski indicated that this would be a DC level 3 Fast Charge Station. Comparing this to the ones in the library, the library you might get 10 miles of battery charge in an hour and with the Level 3 chargers you could get a full battery charge in 20 minutes. This system would have a fee, which comes through as an application on your phone and we would collect the revenue. ZEF Energy is the developer, and they would help to maintain and set up the system. With the approval of the council the application can be submitted for MPCA dollars. We are obligated at signing for \$5000 for the preliminary design, then at final design it would be an additional \$50,500, that would be paid to ZEF Energy. There is a direct pay grant at the White House for these projects, which is being processed through the IRS, some other cities like Grand Portage have been successful in getting those funds, but you apply for those funds after the project is complete. In the design documents for the trailhead, we had 2 charges like what we have at the library, if we went with this, we would not install those and would put these in their place. There is going to be more and more recreational vehicles that are becoming electric in the current and near future. Langowski indicated that this project could be installed in May if approved.

Kess indicated that our budget is already tight, would there be any way money could come out of the trailhead project for these. Langowski indicated that that project budget is already tight, but there might be some additional opportunities coming up through the IRRR. Langowski indicated that this project would be through the Electric Utility and would eventually be paid back by usage.

Kess indicated that he can see this being a draw for people coming to Ely, and maybe eventually we can advertise that we are EV friendly, but it is just a lot of money to spend upfront. Mayor Omerza asked are we forward thinking and do we want to be that destination location that has a lot of things, we are at the end of the road which can be an advantage and a

disadvantage. This could be a point where we could be the advantage and be a reason why people come here instead. We want to make the trailhead something important and this is another way to make it important.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent

Callen/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from Projects Committee to approve the proposal from Ely Custom Theaters for the surveillance, security and access control for the Trailhead facility for \$33,632.40.

Kess indicated that he would feel better about this if we had some additional quotes.

Langowski stated that right now we are currently using this system within the VA Clinic, City Hall, and the Rec Center. This is a local vendor that provides this for us, it doesn't work for us to have a vendor come out of the cities or elsewhere.

Bisbee asked if it is compatible with the current systems. Langowski indicated that yes, it is.

Langowski indicated that we could try to find another provider, but Custom Theaters has provided good service with us.

Kess indicated that he will vote no because of the process not because of issues with Custom Theaters.

Motion Carried 5-1-1 with A.Forsman Absent and Kess voting No.

Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC)

Campbell/Callen moved to approve the recommendation from HPC to reserve the \$1500 received in donations in 2024 for use in 2025 for the workman paintings. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent

Campbell/Debeltz moved to approve the recommendation from HPC to enter into an agreement with the MN Digital Library to add on-line digital access for oral histories projects including the recently completed graduates' oral histories video. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent

Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA): Minutes included in the Council Packet

Park & Recreation Board

Bisbee/Campbell moved to approve the recommendation from Park and Recreation to have the park and rec board be part of the process for the Trailhead Grand Opening.

Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

Clerk-Treasurer

Interview/Scoring Committee for the Hiring of an Equipment Operator

Langowski indicated that this position has been open for about a year and we are looking at scheduling interview in mid-January. In the past the interview committee has been Langowski, Public Works Foreman, the Mayor and a Council Member or two. If you are interested in being on the interview committee let Langowski know.

Langowski stated that we are hoping to have the Rec Center Rink open on Saturday, December 21st. The Hours will be posted on the City Website.

Fire Chief

Chief Marshall discussed the current fire and medical calls for the Fire Department.

Fire Department Minutes and 2024 3rd Quarter Report

Chief Marshall discussed the 2024 3rd Quarter Summary: there were 85 medical calls, 15 fire calls, and 9 other (Meetings, trainings, etc). The department average response rate was 40%. Member response rates to fire calls ranged from low of 0% (2 members) to a high of 87% (1 member) representing 13 of 15 calls (Rich Ojala). Six other members made 60% or more of the calls (Ryan Callen, Louis Gerzine IV, Kevin Gilbert, Dave Marshall, Chris Vesel, and Mike Zgonc).

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 to remove their vehicles from the streets when snow removal is going to happen. Public Works will put signs in the snowbanks to let people know.

Langowski indicted that the city has snow dumps on Pattison and 10th Ave and behind the Sibley/Grahek apartments for contractors to put excess snow there. Also do not obscure the fire hydrants or sidewalks with snow.

Chief Houde stated that they will be having interviews for the open patrol person position on Thursday and hopefully will have a recommendation for a new officer at the first meeting in January for approval.

City Attorney

Kess/Bisbee moved to approve the 2nd Reading Ordinance No. 381 An Ordinance of the City of Ely, Minnesota, Adding to the Ely City Code, Chapter 6, Section 6.41, Entitled Regulating Cannabis Business. Roll Called: Council Members A.Forsman – Absent, Kess- Yes, Debeltz – Yes, Callen – Yes, Campbell – Yes, Bisbee – Yes, and Mayor Omerza – Yes. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Bisbee/Kess moved to approve the 2nd Reading Ordinance No. 383 An Ordinance of the City of Ely, Minnesota, Amending the Ely City Code, Chapter 11, Section 11.50, Entitled Regulation Cannabis Business (Additions Updated Ordinance adding Temporary Cannabis Events as an Interim Use Permit in Permissible Uses Chart) Roll Called: Council Members A.Forsman – Absent, Kess- Yes, Debeltz – Yes, Callen – Yes, Campbell – Yes, Bisbee – Yes, and Mayor Omerza – Yes. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Debeltz/Kess moved to approve the 1st Reading Ordinance No 384 An Ordinance of the City of Ely, Minnesota, Amending the Ely City Code, Chapter 6, Section 6.41, Entitled Pubic Use of Cannabinoid Products. Roll Called: Council Members A.Forsman – Absent, Kess- Yes, Debeltz – Yes, Callen – Yes, Campbell – Yes, Bisbee – Yes, and Mayor Omerza – Yes. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Debeltz/Bisbee moved to schedule a public hearing regarding Ordinance 384 for January 7, 2025 at 5:15pm. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

City Engineer

COMMUNICATIONS: Matter of Information

RAMS 2025 Draft Legislative Priorities

Correspondence from League of Minnesota Cities Regional Safety Group Training Cost Increase for 2025

Correspondence from TKDA regarding the ELO Airport Master Plan Airport Activity Forecast Summary

Correspondence from Watercraft Inspection Program – Ely Area 2024 Season Update

Correspondence from Patti Banks at Ely Bloomenson Community Hospital regarding the NE Regional EMS Taskforce

Correspondence from the St Louis County Fair

Correspondence from Happy Days Learning Center

CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT:

A. City and EUC Claims for December 17, 2024 for \$401,993.81

B. East End Development Project – Change Order #1 which increases the contract amount by \$23,995.27, Pay Estimate #5 to Low Impact Excavators Inc for \$99,644.86, and Final Pay Estimate #6 to Low Impact Excavators for \$32,071.34.

C. Pay Application #6 for the Ely Regional Trailhead Building for \$192,227.91 to Max Gray Construction Inc

D. Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails 2025 Membership Dues for \$175.00

E. Invoice #1572 for the Depot Project for \$53,428.80 to Low Impact Excavators, Inc

F. Invoice #99304 to AE2S for the WWTF Improvements Project for 159.00 and Invoice #99306 to AE2S for General Consulting Services for \$4440.00.

Debeltz/Campbell moved to approve the Claims for Payment items A-F. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Callen/Bisbee moved to approve Resolution 2024-046 Resolution Supporting Grant Application to the MN DNR Grant-In-Aid Snowmobile Trail Assistance Program for Maintenance and Grooming. Roll Called: Council Members A.Forsman – Absent, Kess- Yes, Debeltz – Yes, Callen – Yes, Campbell – Yes, Bisbee – Yes, and Mayor Omerza – Yes. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Kess/Callen moved to approve Resolution 2024-047 Resolution Approving the City of Ely Budget for the Fiscal Year 2025. Roll Called: Council Members A.Forsman – Absent, Kess- Yes, Debeltz – Yes, Callen – Yes, Campbell – Yes, Bisbee – Yes, and Mayor Omerza – Yes. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Kess/Callen moved to approve Resolution 2024-048 Resolution Approving and Adopting Final Tax Levy Collectible in 2025. Roll Called: Council Members A.Forsman – Absent, Kess- Yes, Debeltz – Yes, Callen – Yes, Campbell – Yes, Bisbee – Yes, and Mayor Omerza – Yes. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Debeltz/Callen moved to approve to Advertise for Open Committee Seats that the term limits will be expiring or coming due in January 31, 2025. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Bisbee/Debeltz moved to accept the resignation of Morgan Sauls from the Park & Recreation Board and to send her a thank you for her service. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Bisbee indicated that the Park and Rec Board nominated Abby Dare as the Chair of Park and Rec.

Campbell/Callen moved to approve the Walker, Giroux & Hahne Understanding of Services that they will provide to the City of Ely for the year ending December 31, 2024. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Kess/Callen moved to send a Letter of Support for the RAMS Board Resolution #24-01. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

Callen/Debeltz moved to approve Resolution 2024-049 the Resolution Authorizing Application for Ely Arts and Heritage Center to Apply for Raffle Permit. Roll Called: Council Members A.Forsman – Absent, Kess- Yes, Debeltz – Yes, Callen – Yes, Campbell – Yes, Bisbee – Yes, and Mayor Omerza – Yes. Motion Carried 6-0-1 with A.Forsman Absent.

OPEN FORUM:

Richard Stuart – 1460 Jarvi Rd

Stuart thanked the all the fellow elyites for voicing their concerns regarding cannabis. Stuart indicated that they are planning on including educational materials for each point of sale and also planning on educational listening sessions. Stuart indicated that he went to Ironwood, Michigan on a research trip and in a one mile stretch they had five dispensaries, it was not a pretty site, and it was not something to be enjoyed. In Michigan you can buy product and they put it in a regular simple bag. Stuart indicated that they will not be doing that, they plan on using an opaque packaging bag that is child resistant, anyone that comes through the dispensary, not only do they get their educational materials, their products will also be placed in an opaque child resistant bag that is clearly labeled. Stuart thanked everyone for there hard work.

ADJOURN:

Mayor Omerza wished everyone Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year.
Mayor Omerza adjourned the meeting at 6:57pm without objection.

Casey Velcheff
Deputy Clerk