

**MINUTES - BENSON CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING  
CITY HALL  
JANUARY 2, 2025**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mayor Evenson. Members present: Jack Evenson, Dan Enderson, Eric Payne and Gary Landmark. Members Absent: Nancy Maanum. Also present: City Clerk Valerie Alsaker, Director of Finance Lisa Kent, Public Works Jeff Reuss, City Manager Rob Wolfington, CEDA Representative Hillary Tweed, Police Chief Ian Hodge and Derek Shemon.

The Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Enderson offered the following resolution:

**CITY OF BENSON  
RESOLUTION APPOINTING PERSON TO FILL A VACANCY  
(RESOLUTION NO. 2025-01)**

**WHEREAS**, a vacancy exists on the Benson City Council.

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Benson City Charter the council shall fill the vacancy of a City Council Member with less than a year left on their term.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BENSON, MINNESOTA, AS FOLLOWS:**

1. The council appoints Gary Landmark to fill the vacant position until such time that a new council member has been elected and qualified.

Councilmember Payne seconded the foregoing resolution and the following vote was recorded: AYES: Evenson, Landmark, Enderson, Payne. NAYES: None. Thereupon the Mayor declared Resolution 2025-01 duly passed and adopted.

Alsaker approached to the Council to perform the Oath of Office with new Mayor Jack Evenson, then performed he Oath of Office with new Councilmembers Eric Payne and Gary Landmark.

The Mayor asked for any changes to the agenda. The following items were added to the agenda: Exempt Wages, AFCME Union Contract, Wage Study and Discovery Kids Discussion. It was moved by Landmark, seconded by Payne and carried unanimously to approve the amended agenda.

It was moved by Enderson, seconded by Landmark, and carried unanimously to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

- December 16, 2024 Regular City Council Minutes
- October 21, 2024 EDA Meeting
- Charter Communications Changes
- Park Board – Barb Nelson
- Electronic Transfers:

Payroll: December 12, 2024 - \$183,486.38  
December 26, 2024 - \$97,400.43

The Mayor called for anyone with unscheduled business, to which there was no one.

Next was City Council Appointments. It was then moved by Enderson, seconded by Payne and carried unanimously to approve the following City Council Appointments.

<b>Chain of Command:</b>	Jack Evenson [Mayor] Dan Enderson Nancy Maanum Eric Payne Gary Landmark
Airport Board [Liaison]	Dan Enderson and Eric Payne
<b>Blight Committee:</b>	Dan Enderson and Jack Evenson
<b>EDA:</b> [Voting Members]	Gary Landmark and Jack Evenson
<b>Fire Board:</b>	Nancy Maanum
HRA: [Voting Members]	[Council opted to leave one spot open] Jack Evenson
<b>Library Board:</b> [Council Liaison]	Dan Enderson and Nancy Maanum
<b>Liquor Committee:</b>	
<b>Park Board:</b>	
Voting Member	Eric Payne
Council Liaison	[Council opted to leave this position open in 2022]
<b>Personnel Committee:</b>	Jack Evenson and Dan Enderson
<b>Planning Commission:</b> [Voting Member]	Jack Evenson and Dan Enderson
<b>Utility Committee:</b>	Jack Evenson and Dan Enderson
<b>Facilities Committee:</b>	Gary Landmark and Jack Evenson
<b>Civic Center Board:</b>	Dan Enderson
<b>Kid Day Committee:</b>	Dan Enderson and Jack Evenson
City Attorney (Civil):	Stephen Kowal
Prosecuting Attorney (Criminal):	Danielle Olson

It was moved by Landmark, seconded by Enderson and carried unanimously to designate the Monitor News as the official newspaper in 2025.

It was moved by Enderson, seconded by Landmark and carried unanimously that state banks, national banks, and thrift institutions located either within or outside the State of Minnesota that qualify as depositories under Minnesota Law are hereby designated as depositories for the City of Benson.

It was moved by Enderson, seconded by Payne and carried unanimously to authorize the following as check signers on all accounts: Mayor Jack Evenson, Director of Finance Lisa Kent, City Manager Rob Wolfington. Incidental Fund: Valerie Alsaker and Sara Jensen and Sara Jensen on the Hospital Fund.

It was moved by Enderson, seconded by Landmark and carried unanimously to approve the City of Benson Electronic Funds and Wire Transfers Policy as presented.

Councilmember Enderson offered the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION DESIGNATING AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATION  
(RESOLUTION NO. 2025-02)**

WHEREAS, THE Governing body of the City of Benson, Minnesota has entered into an agreement to establish The **Missouri Basin Municipal Power Agency, d.b.a. Missouri Rivers Energy Services (MRES)**, and as a member thereof is entitled to a representative who shall represent the Municipal Utility in the business of MRES.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Robert Wolfington be and is hereby authorized and appointed as the representative of the City of Benson, Minnesota, to represent the Municipal Utility in the business of MRES, with the powers, duties and responsibilities as provided in said agreement. The alternate representative, Jack Evenson, is hereby authorized and appointed with equal powers.

Councilmember Landmark seconded the foregoing resolution and the following vote was recorded: AYES: Evenson, Landmark, Payne, Enderson. NAYES: None. Thereupon the Mayor declared Resolution 2025-02 duly passed and adopted.

Councilmember Enderson offered the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION DESIGNATING AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATION  
(RESOLUTION NO. 2025-03)**

WHEREAS, THE Governing body of the City of Benson, Minnesota has entered into an agreement to establish The **Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (WMMPA)**, and as a member thereof is entitled to a representative who shall represent the Municipal Utility in the business of WMMPA.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Robert Wolfington be and is hereby authorized and appointed as the representative of the City of Benson, Minnesota, to represent the Municipal Utility in the business of WMMPA, with the powers, duties and responsibilities as provided in said agreement. The alternate representative, Jack Evenson, is hereby authorized and appointed with equal powers.

Councilmember Landmark seconded the foregoing resolution and the following vote was recorded: AYES: Evenson, Landmark, Payne, Enderson. NAYES: None. Thereupon the Mayor declared Resolution 2025-03 duly passed and adopted.

Councilmember Landmark offered the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION TO CONTRACT FOR SALE OF  
SURPLUS, OBSOLETE OR UNUSED EQUIPMENT  
(RESOLUTION NO. 2025-04)**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Benson has a need from time to time to sell surplus, obsolete or unused equipment; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Minnesota Municipal Contracting Law, Minnesota Statutes Section 471.345, Subdivision 17 permits a municipality to sell such surplus, obsolete or unused equipment, without a requirement of competitive bidding, by using an electronic selling process in which purchasers compete to purchase the surplus equipment at the highest price in an open and interactive environment; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City Council finds that the use of such an electronic selling process would be cost effective, efficient and in the best interest of the City and its citizens; and,

**WHEREAS**, J.A.X. of Benson is a local franchisee of K-Bid and is able to provide an electronic selling process which will fill the needs of the City; and,

**WHEREAS**, Jack Evenson, the owner of J.A.X. of Benson is a member of the Benson City Council and therefore a public officer of the City of Benson, Minnesota Statutes Section 471.87 prohibits a public officer who is authorized to take part in any manner in making any sale, lease or contract in an official capacity from having a financial interest in that sale, lease or contract or from personally benefitting therefrom; and,

**WHEREAS**, Minnesota Statutes Section 471.88 provides an exception to the prohibition stated in Minnesota Statutes Section 471.87 for a contract for which competitive bids are not required by law; and,

**WHEREAS**, competitive bids are not required by law to enter into a contract for services for arranging the sale of city property; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City Council finds that the contract price offered by J.A.X of Benson is as low as or lower than the price at which the services could be obtained elsewhere.

**NOW THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that the city manager is authorized to enter into a contract with J.A.X of Benson for the sale of surplus, obsolete or unused City equipment through the use of an electronic selling process which meets the requirements of Minnesota Statutes Section 471.345, Subdivision 17.

Councilmember Enderson seconded the foregoing resolution and the following vote was recorded: AYES: Evenson, Landmark, Payne, Enderson. NAYES: None. Thereupon the Mayor declared Resolution 2025-04 duly passed and adopted.

Next the Council reviewed two applications for one open position on the EDA Board. It was moved by Enderson, seconded by Payne and carried unanimously to approve appointing Mike Nicholas to the EDA Board.

Wolfington presented a pay request from MRES for the electric rate study. Wolfington said he is working with MRES to revise the study, which should show a lower electric rate increase. He said this study will be revised before the new City Manager comes on board. He also inserted MRES paid for half of the study. It was moved by Enderson, seconded by Payne and carried unanimously to approve the pay request from MRES in the amount of \$9,500.00.

Next was the final pay request from Total Control Systems for the SCADA system for the wastewater plant upgrade. It was moved by Landmark, seconded by Enderson and carried unanimously to approve the pay request from Total Control Systems, Inc. in the amount of \$82,312.06.

Wolfington presented a pay request from AE2S for work on the Wastewater facility plan. It was moved by Enderson, seconded by Payne and carried unanimously to approve the pay request from AE2S in the amount of \$8,661.00.

Tweed approached to present the 2025 CEDA contract for services. She said the contract is for 6 days of service per week, with a 5% increase for an annual cost of \$121,306. It was moved by Landmark, seconded by Enderson and carried unanimously to approve the 2025 CEDA Contract as presented.

Tweed presented the EDA Budget for 2025. Expenses and revenues were recorded. Tweed said this is the first year there is no PILOT money transferred from EDA to the General fund. She also noted this is the first year of the \$20,000 reduction on the Abundant Ag five year forgivable loan. Enderson asked if that loan came out of the Revolving Loan Fund. Tweed said no. That loan came from a transfer out of the Xcel money, transferred into the EDA funds. She said the EDA board reviewed the budget and recommended approval to the City Council. After discussion, it was moved by Payne, seconded by Landmark and carried unanimously to approve the EDA budget for 2025 as presented.

Wolfington said he would like to see a strategic planning session for the Council. He said he had already scheduled Marcy Douglas with MRES for March 28 & 29, 2025. There was discussion about postponing the strategic planning until after the new Councilmember is elected. Wolfington said he would come back with options for fall of 2025.

Reuss approached to discuss a sewer issue at 18<sup>th</sup> St. N. and Idaho Ave. He said we had reports on December 22, 2024 of sewer issues at this location. Staff went out and discovered the manhole was deteriorating, which caused a break in the clay sewer pipe, which was causing significant deterioration of the soil around the break. After further exploration, it appears two blocks of sewer line on 18<sup>th</sup> St. N. need to be replaced. He said he would like to contact Rodeberg and Berryman to prepare plans and specs, and bring this estimate for replacement to the January 13, 2025 City Council meeting. This project would be slated for the summer of 2025. Wolfington said we were hoping to have the assessment policy in place by summer, so this project will not be part of an assessment project. We were trying to expedite the policy procedure, but staff agreed they didn't want to rush the process and if we will be living with assessments in the future, we want to make sure policies are executed correctly. Wolfington said no action is needed, and to be aware a proposal will be presented on January 13. He added Storm sewer will have to be replaced as well.

Tweed said the Armory reconstruction projects is in the bidding process, and the bid opening will be at 2:00 p.m. on January 14, 2025. She said the first pre-bid meeting was cancelled because of bad weather. The new date is scheduled for January 7, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. Wolfington suggested to the Council they may want to schedule a special Council meeting to review the bids and decide on the project.

Wolfington discussed a possible City Manager review. The Council felt it wasn't necessary. Wolfington took the opportunity to discuss the new City Manager hiring process. He is hoping to be done as the interim City Manager by the end of May. Currently the position is being advertised through January 31, 2025. Applications will be going to the City Attorney in case of an internal candidate. The personnel committee will select the finalists, which will be made public at that time. He also asked the Council not to rush the hiring process and to find a good candidate for the City.

Next exempt wages for 2025 were presented:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Proposed 2025</b>	<b>Percent Increase</b>	<b>Dollar Increase</b>
Robert Wolfington	City Manager Interim	\$116,000	\$123,000	6%	\$7,000
Lisa Kent	Director of Finance	\$91,700	\$97,200	6%	\$5,500

Jeff Reuss	Public Works Director	----	\$102,000	0%	\$0
Ian Hodge	Police Chief	\$110,000	\$116,600	6%	\$6,600
Valerie Alsaker	City Clerk	\$77,600	\$82,250	6%	\$4,650
Janie Reuss	Liquor Store Manager	\$72,800	74,250	2%	\$1,450
Scott Girard	Police Sergeant	\$41.52	44.00	6%	\$2.48
Elliot Nelson	Public Works Director Interim	\$50	\$50	--	--

It was moved by Landmark, seconded by Payne and carried unanimously to approve the exempt wages for 2025 as presented.

Wolfington said Kent negotiated the AFSCME contract for the next two years. He said there was an increased step added and a 6% increase each year, and an adjustment for licensed water/wastewater employees and callout compensation. After discussion, it was moved by Landmark, seconded by Anderson and carried unanimously to approve the 2025-2026 AFSCME contract as presented.

Wolfington said \$20,000 has been budgeted in 2025 to conduct a wage and systems market study on exempt wages. It's been many years since one has been done. We have been required to follow the state job match. We looked to the League of MN Cities for companies that conduct studies. We have narrowed it down to David Drown Associates, who does the most work for cities under a population of 30,000. By conducting this study, we can apply it to updating the state job match. After discussion, it was moved by Enderson, seconded by Payne and carried unanimously to conduct the wage study using David Drown Associates at a cost not to exceed \$9,300.

Mayor Evenson said with the troubles at the school run Discovery Kids Day Care program, there was a meeting with Wolfington, Evenson, Superintendent Laumeyer, and School Board Chairman Brian Samuelson along with daycare consultant Business of Childcare. The point of the meeting was to engage Business of Childcare to see if it would be worthwhile to hire them to help analyze Discovery Kids financials. Laumeyer had stated they are running a \$75,000 deficit. The Mayor said Business of Childcare said they would for a fee of \$3,500 analyze finances and staffing. He proposed to the Council we split the cost with the school in hopes of solving the Discovery Kids dilemma. Landmark asked if the school has agreed to this to which the Mayor said not yet, but it will be going to the School Board on January 6, 2025. Enderson asked who is currently doing the finances. Evenson said currently First Children's Finance is looking at it for free, then they will turn their findings over to Business of Childcare. Landmark expressed concerns about stepping on the School Board's toes on this issue. After further discussion, it was moved by Enderson, seconded by Payne and carried unanimously to pay half of the \$3,500 Business of Child Care initial analysis of Discovery Kids finances.

There being no further business to come before the Council a motion was made by Landmark, seconded by Enderson and carried unanimously to adjourn the Council meeting at 6:51 p.m.

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Mayor

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City Clerk