

**MINUTES - BENSON CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING  
CITY HALL  
MARCH 1, 2021**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mayor Collins. Members present: Terri Collins, Jack Evenson, Mark Schreck & Jon Buyck. Members Absent: Lucas Olson. Also present: City Manager Rob Wolfington, Public Works Director Dan Gens, Police Chief Ian Hodge, Fire Chief Jeff Reuss, Marti Benson, Val Alsaker, Hillary Tweed from CEDA and Reed Anfinson Also attending telephonically was Ben Wilcox.

The Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Mayor asked for any changes to the agenda to which there was none. It was moved by Evenson, seconded by Schreck and carried unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

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

- February 16, 2021 City Council Minutes
- January 7, 2021 Special EDA Minutes
- Electronic Transfers: Payroll: February 25, 2021 - \$97,010.46

The Mayor asked for anyone with unscheduled business to which there was none.

Chief Reuss approached the Council to discuss the 2020 Fire Report. He reviewed the number of calls and a breakdown of the calls. He said they currently have 30 full-time and 4 part-time firefighters.

Next Reuss presented a capital authorization request for new turnout gear. His request is for 4 sets of structure fire turn-out gear, and 30 sets of wildland grass fighting gear. The structure turn-out gear is to replace 4 sets that are worn. The grassland fire gear is a 2-piece set, and isn't as heavy or hot to wear. Currently they have coveralls that are cumbersome to work in. Reuss went on to say they already have scheduled burns for farmers, and they plan to put the donations toward the new gear. He said the structure fire gear will cost \$8,772, and the grassland gear will cost \$12,228. After discussion, it was moved by Evenson, seconded by Buyck and carried unanimously to approve the capital request for grass fire turnout gear and 4 sets of regular turnout gear in the amount of \$21,000.

Reuss presented a request for Officer Pay Increase. He said the 7 officers who have leadership roles in the department have not had a pay increase since 2016, and is asking for \$300 for each officer. Evenson asked what other departments officers are paid, and Reuss said it varies widely among surrounding departments. After discussion it was moved by Evenson, seconded by Buyck and carried unanimously to approve a pay increase for each of the officers in the amount of \$300 per year per officer.

Tweed approached the Council representing the Benson Golf Club with a capital request for a 2005 skid steer purchase. It is a John Deere 320 skid steer with 445 hours on it. They will use it for loading fertilizer, leveling cart paths and grinding stumps around the course which will make the work load easier, and they won't be asking to borrow the City's skid steer when they need one. This is a capital request toward their annual \$25,000 equipment purchase. The cost of the skid steer is \$25,900. Tweed said they will cover the \$900 out of their operating budget. After discussion, it was moved by Buyck, seconded by Schreck and carried unanimously to approve the capital equipment request in the amount of \$25,000.

Tweed discussed the MRES Carbon Free Certificate. Currently, the City's Municipal Utility

purchases power that is 93% carbon free. Governor Walz announced on January 25, 2021 that the goal is that Minnesota will run on 100% carbon-free power by 2040. Sources of carbon-free energy are solar, wind, hydropower, eligible hydroelectric, biomass & biowaste and geothermal. Providing carbon-free energy allows individuals to participate in green energy programs without the equipment costs. The cost for the City to go 100% carbon free is \$2,400.26 per year. This figure is based on total kWh sales in the 2019 EIA report. After discussion, it was moved by Evenson, seconded by Buyck and carried unanimously to buy into the carbon free program.

Wolfington presented a letter from the Census Bureau thanking the Complete Count Committee for a job well done. He said our region out-performed the country. He credited the Chicago office and those working regionally and the local committee for a job well done. When the census results are officially in, he will share them with the Council.

Chief Hodge approached the Council. He said the deaths on roadways in 2020 increased. He presented a resolution for a grant from the State on the "Toward Zero Deaths" program. Grant monies will go toward more officers on over the summer months monitoring traffic. The grant is \$4,700, with a local match of \$940. He said we have participated in this program many times over the years, and presented a resolution for the Council's consideration. After discussion Councilmember Schreck presented the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF AGREEMENT  
(RESOLUTION 2021-10)**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Benson Police Department enter into a grant agreement with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, for traffic safety enforcement projects during the period from February 1 – September 30, 2021.

THE BENSON POLICE CHIEF is hereby authorized to execute such agreements and amendments as are necessary to implement the project on behalf of the Benson Police Department and to be the fiscal agent and administer the grant.

Councilmember Buyck seconded the foregoing resolution and the following vote was recorded: AYES: Evenson, Collins, Olson, Buyck, Schreck. NAYES: None. Thereupon the Mayor declared Resolution 2021-10 duly passed and adopted.

Next Alsaker approached the Council. She said 2001 was the last time the safety manuals for the City of Benson were revised. There are 31 sections in these manuals and are hard for employees to use. She and MMUA's safety officer have worked to revise the safety manuals. She handed out the revised manual for the Council to review. She said it is an OSHA requirement to have a safety manual in place. After discussion, it was moved by Schreck, seconded by Buyck and carried unanimously to approve the revised safety manual for the City.

Wolfington discussed the polar vortex event that left Texas without power. He presented a news release and letter to the editor that we sent to the Monitor News for publication, explaining how our regional transmission organization (RTO) MISO helped support power supply to the SPP RTO in their time of need. He said he doesn't anticipate a bill for the extra generation for this weather event.

Gens presented a pay request from Stantec Engineering for wastewater plant upgrades for the boiler system and digester. Schreck asked if we have received the parts we pre-ordered yet. Gens said the purchase orders have been submitted, and we hope to meet our timelines. After discussion, it was moved by Buyck, seconded by Evenson and carried unanimously to approve the pay request to Stantec in the amount of \$18,368.25.

There being no further business to come before the Council a motion was made by Evenson seconded by Schreck and carried unanimously to adjourn the Council meeting at 5:57 p.m.

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Mayor

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City Clerk