

**MINUTES - BENSON CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
CITY HALL
APRIL 5, 2021**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mayor Collins. Members present: Terri Collins, Jack Evenson, Lucas Olson, Mark Schreck & Jon Buyck. Members Absent: None. Also present: City Manager Rob Wolfington, Director of Finance Glen Pederson, Public Works Director Dan Gens, Police Chief Ian Hodge, Steve Benson, Debbie and Clarice Beyer, Eric Tolifson, Dave Tolifson, Anne Johnson, Diane Doscher, Jon Dokken and Reed Anfinson. Also attending telephonically was Hillary Tweed from CEDA, Tom Cherveney with the West Central Tribune, Jane Howard, Stephanie Heinzig, Rick and Peggy Cameron, and Gene Doscher.

The Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Mayor asked for any changes to the agenda. \$750 DNR Grant and Street & Sewer Repair was added. It was moved by Evenson, seconded by Schreck and carried unanimously to approve the amended agenda.

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

- March 15, 2021 City Council Minutes
- March 27, 2021 Special City Council Minutes
- May 4, 2020 Cemetery Minutes
- March 5, 2021 Safety Committee Minutes

Electronic Transfers:

- Payroll: \$92,039.99 – March 25, 2021

The Mayor asked for anyone with unscheduled business. Debbie Beyer approached the Council to speak about parking in front of her townhouse on 12th St. S. across from SuperValu. She said the curb had been painted yellow by someone, and now the paint has worn off. People park along this street and it is hard for the residents to access their homes. Wolfington said the City did not paint the curb at this location. After discussion it was agreed Ms. Beyer would talk to Wolfington tomorrow and discuss the issue.

Armory demolition was first on the agenda. Councilmember Schreck reviewed previous Council action leading up to demolition bids received this year. The Mayor said the building is not on any historic register. Schreck said we will need to look at facts versus emotions when making the decision whether to demolish the Armory. He asked Wolfington how much have we spent over the last 4 years on various studies. Wolfington said \$35,000. The Mayor said when we rebuilt the swimming pool she was on the "Blue Ribbon Committee". She asked if we should have a "Blue Ribbon Committee" for the Armory. Wolfington suggested if there is a committee formed they first need to determine a use for the Armory, which will determine the codes for the use and the scope of work will determine the budget, which will determine the funding source. Schreck said we have several buildings in town that can house activities currently held in the Armory including 2 school buildings with gym space and kitchens for emergency situations. Olson stated he has no emotional attachment to the building but sees practical uses for it. After discussion it was moved by Evenson, and seconded by Olson to reject all demolition bids for the Armory. The following vote was recorded: AYES: Evenson, Buyck, Collins, Olson. NAYES: Schreck. The motion passed. It was then moved by Evenson to form a committee on the Armory renovation/possible demolition to include 7 members made of up 4 citizens, 2 Councilmembers Olson & Evenson and 1 staff

member, to come back in 3 months with their findings. The motion was seconded by Olson. Discussion included directing the committee to present monthly reports on their progress, and scope of work. The motion passed unanimously.

Next was a wedding reception request with street closure at Patrick's Pub and Grill. Patrick's were going to talk to the party to ask questions on securing the tent and how many days they needed to close off the street as well as if the dance is public or private. There was no information for the Council, and the Mayor tabled the request until the next meeting.

There was a request from the Prom Afterbash Committee for support. The Mayor asked if the City wanted to donate something or would each Councilmember rather donate personally. Pederson said the auditors recommend not using City revenue to support private events. It was the consensus of the Council to decline a donation to the Prom Afterbash.

The east end of Kansas Avenue commonly known as Gusty's Road was the next item on the agenda. Wolfington gave a history of the joint orderly annexation of the road and surrounding property between the City and Torning Township in 2001. Wolfington said he and the residents have met about the condition of the road and lack of services. He said the City has devised 5 separate strategies and grants over several years to get the road repaired with no success. The railroad installed switch gear which has possibly covered a storm sewer drain along the road. Wolfington went on to say the City will be receiving \$349,000 from the recovery act monies. He feels the Gusty's Road project would be a qualified use of these funds. He said he has met with Gens and LandTeam and developed a scope of work. LandTeam's cost for services is \$46,330. This would allow for a proper storm sewer down the road, survey work and road work all at an estimated cost of \$250,000. He went on to say there is a possible second source of funding in the Xcel dollars. Schreck asked if we could get a request for proposal from a couple of companies that do this work. There was discussion on the process of bidding public projects and the cost of engineering. It was then moved by Evenson, seconded by Olson and carried unanimously to approve the professional services agreement with LandTeam for Gusty's Road engineering. Wolfington asked the Council if they would like to have a work session at the next meeting on funding public projects and how they are delivered, to which the Council agreed.

Next Wolfington said the power plant has been here for over 100 years. He said the current generators are 5th generation. He reviewed the different generators over the years. He presented the Missouri River Energy Services (MRES) Reserved Capacity Agreement, and said it is set to expire in the next few years. If we renew this it will expire at the same time as the S-1 Agreement, which is in 2052. We will need to research and talk to MRES in order to approve in the next few months. This is an opportunity to extend the life of the plant and extend the generation payments to the City.

Wolfington noted to the Council the MRES Annual meeting is being held virtually on May 5, 2021. If anyone wishes to attend, they can register on the MRES website.

Next Wolfington summed up the Strategic Planning discussion points from the meeting held at the Golf Club on March 27, 2021. Tweed said she will be consolidating what pertains to her position and bring the work plan to the City Council.

Wolfington discussed Great River Energy, MRES, Agralite, Ottertail Power and the City of Benson have met to discuss how to replace the lost electric capacity from the closing of the Fibrominn plant. A plan is being researched to run a new 115KV line from Appleton to Benson. Great River Energy would own the line, and meetings continue to find a way to bring this line through Benson to our substation next to the power plant. The plan is to settle on a route and then permits need to be sent into the state. Wolfington presented a meeting summary listing several

challenges for the project. This project will most likely take 4 years to complete. There will be an open house for public input in the future.

Tweed said Ray Davies with Nature Energy reached out to the City and a trip to Denmark to see Nature Energy plants is in the works. It's all preliminary, but the tentative itinerary would consist of a 14 hour flight, and 3 days on the ground. We would be touring with other community representatives where Natures Energy is planning projects. Other visits to the Corporate offices, farms and renewable natural gas facilities tours are also planned. This will take place at the end of May 2021, depending on COVID restrictions. Schreck asked what Nature Energy has asked of the City. Evenson said so far nothing. The Mayor said she feels EDA representatives Evenson, Schreck and Tweed will be good candidates to go, with the Mayor as an alternate. Tweed stated there are alternate trips planned in the future.

Councilmember Evenson offered the following resolution:

**CITY OF BENSON
RESOLUTION ACCEPTING DONATIONS
(RESOLUTION NO. 2021-11)**

WHEREAS, The City of Benson is generally authorized to accepts gifts and bequests pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 465.03 and Minnesota Statutes Section 471.17 for the benefit of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the following persons and entities have offered to contribute the cash amounts set forth below to the city:

**Library Patrons \$43.35 to Benson Public Library
Benson Residents \$342.00 for Beautify Benson Shirts
Shepherd of the Hills \$50.00 Fire Donation
Clayton Dale \$10.00 Fire Department in Memory of Dennis DeHaan
Eugene Doscher \$25.00 Fire Department in Memory of Dennis DeHaan**

WHEREAS, all such donations have been contributed to assist the various city departments and programs as allowed by law; and

WHEREAS, The City Council finds that it is appropriate to accept the donations offered.

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

1. The donations described above are accepted and shall be used to benefit the departments listed above, as allowed by law.

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 2021-11 duly passed and adopted.

It was moved by Evenson, seconded by Buyck and carried unanimously to approve pay request #6 to MN Mechanical for work on the water plant chlorine repairs in the amount of \$82,569.63.

It was moved by Evenson, seconded by Olson and carried unanimously to approve a pay request from Stantec Engineering for Clearwell & pumps station work in the amount of \$33,915.75

It was moved by Olson, seconded Evenson and carried unanimously to approve a pay request from Stantec Engineering for WWTF upgrades in the amount of \$25,854.75.

Next Pederson said the Fire Department has the opportunity to receive a semi-annual grant offered by the DNR in the amount of \$750. This is a matching grant. After discussion it was moved by Schreck, seconded by Evenson and carried unanimously to authorize the Fire Chief and City Clerk to sign the grant agreement.

Schreck said he has had numerous complaints on the conditions of the streets. He is asking the Utility Board to meet with Wolfington and Gens to come up with a solution. Wolfington suggested 3 roads that need work, and each road will be costly to repair. He offered the following options for funding; Xcel dollars, assessing the projects and bonding. Schreck suggested a 6 month plan, a 2 and 5 year plan for road repairs. Gens said we cannot add to this year's work, as it will be too hard to find anyone to do the work. After discussion it was moved by Schreck to direct the Utility Board to meet with Wolfington and Gens, come up with a plan for 6 months, 2 years and 5 years along with funding options to spend \$1 million. The motion was seconded by Evenson and carried unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Council a motion was made by Evenson seconded by Buyck and carried unanimously to adjourn the Council meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk