

**MINUTES - BENSON CITY COUNCIL - SPECIAL MEETING
AUGUST 16, 2018**

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Mayor Collins in the Swift County Benson Hospital meeting room. Members present: Jack Evenson, Terri Collins, Mark Schreck & Lucas Olson. Members Absent: None. Also present: City Manager Rob Wolfington, Director of Finance Glen Pederson, Director of Public Works Dan Gens, Police Chief Ian Hodge, and Jon Buyck.

The Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Wolfington stated the reason for the meeting was to consider a list of items to place an engineered value on in order to designate the Xcel Energy grant dollars to before the end of the year and to review discretionary dollars for the 2019 budget.

A list of suggested designations was presented and discussed:

- Purchase Industrial Land
- Solar Project
- Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrades
- Elevator Demolition
- Gustie's Road
- Housing Project
- Hire Economic Development Director
- 13 Ways

The purchase of industrial land on the south side of town was viewed as economic development and an acceptable use of the grant dollars. Two council members will be appointed to negotiate pricing with the local land owners.

Our power contract with Missouri River Energy Services allows us to add distributed generation of up to 5% of our S-1 allocation. The use of funds for this project would fall in line with the green energy goals of the City.

Wastewater treatment facility upgrades were considered to be economic development eligible. A 2017 report outlined the deferred maintenance needs of the facility. Any purchase of industrial land would require upgrades to the collection system.

The elevator demolition project was not considered to be an economic development project but rather a blight and public safety issue.

Gustie's road and the railroad safety project was discussed which were part of a safety study completed by the city over the past several years. Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. completed the study and has submitted a bid of \$21,000 to complete an application for a newly created CRISI Grant. Consensus of the council was to approve the use of Xcel Grant dollars to enter into a contract with Stantec for a 50/50 grant for all aspects of the railroad safety and road projects identified in the Study.

Discussion was held regarding housing. The Cottage Square subdivision is currently vacant and could possibly be purchased for development. Purchasing the house that is constructed each year by the High School and placed on vacant lots throughout the city was also considered. Consensus was to consider this item as an Economic Development activity.

The hiring of an Economic Development Director was considered. Members considered the

amount of time that the City Manager has spent on these activities over the last year. Duties would include marketing, creating an alumni association, and pursuing housing opportunities. Consensus was to include this in the Economic Development activities of the Grant and to proceed with developing a job description.

13 Ways was the next topic. This is Doug Griffiths program to help communities revitalize. Consensus was to proceed with the program with Mayor Collins and Reed Anfinson taking the lead and developing the criteria of what we hope to achieve.

The following items on the agenda were removed and to be placed on the August 20th Regular Council meeting:

City Hall Project
2019 Parks Projects Priority
City Manager's Review

The referendum for the Benson Public School passed by a 69% to 31% margin this past Tuesday. The City Manager reported that we would have some costs for Utility and street work but that the cost was unknown at this time.

A review of the Sewer backup into four homes was presented. Wolfington theorized that at 3PM on Saturday a blown electrical fuse in the distribution system had caused the lift station on 13th Street South to shut down. Staff reported in response to a plumbers request to check a manhole on Sunday morning and discovered that it was full of sewage. They proceeded to pump the system and reset the lift station. It has been reported to our insurance company who will make a determination if the City will be held liable.

On Tuesday the 14th the City electrical distribution crew was boring underground in the highway right of way to the south of the Shell gas station and hit a natural gas main. A 2" gas main was marked and located but a 4" main was not. The city was not at fault in this situation. Response from city crews to secure and protect public safety was commendable.

Wolfington reported on the status of BrightMark Energy. They are working with Xcel Energy for the purchase of the former Benson Power property and how to justify a sale price of the plant. Over the next 30 days there will be appraisals made in hopes of negotiating a purchase. Xcel Energy staff is proceeding on a dual path for both demolition and sale of the property. Demolition is proposed to begin in April.

The Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities approached the City to gauge our interest in co-sponsoring a candidate forum here in Benson. Consensus of the Council was to agree to co-sponsor the event.

A report was received by Wolfington today from USAquatics regarding the condition of the swimming pool including condition of tiles, sealing cracks on the pool deck, the water quality and boilers issues. The report identified several thousand dollars in repairs that are needed. A more thorough review will be made when the pool has been drained.

Discussion was held on a complaint of not allowing life jackets in the swimming pool except during family swim. The City Manager reported that the policy was adopted when the new pool was opened. A review of best practices revealed that it is up to each community to allow or not allow life jackets and that no one option was in the majority.

There being no further business the Council adjourned by consensus at 7:20 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk