



CITY OF NEWPORT
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Newport, MN 55055
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CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES December 1, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Elliott called the City Council Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. on December 1, 2022.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

Present (5): Mayor Laurie Elliott, Council Member Kevin Chapdelaine, Council Member Tom Ingemann, Council Member Marvin Taylor, and Council Member Rozlyn Johnson.

Not Present (0): None.

4. ADOPT AGENDA

Member Chapdelaine motioned to adopt the agenda. Seconded by Member Johnson. Approved 5-0.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bill Sumner, residing at 737 21st Street, addressed the Council. Mr. Sumner stated the Basic Needs organization has a newly opened food pantry at the Methodist Church on 11th Avenue. The library will be having a community event on December 10th from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. You can participate by singing, reading a poem, or other events. The Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) will be looking for members and has a meeting on December 14th. There will be a history talk at the library after the HPC meeting.

6. ADOPT CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes- November 3, 2022 Council Workshop
- B. Gambling Application- Capital City Strutters
- C. Gambling Application- Capital City Strutters
- D. List of Bills- \$131,135.11

Member Ingemann motioned to adopt the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Member Johnson. Approved 5-0.

7. WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE REPORT

Washington County Sheriff's Deputy Sergeant Bill Harrell stated this time of year they usually see an uptick in package thefts, so residents should call 9-1-1 if they see anything suspicious and bring packages in as soon as possible. Sergeant Harrell reminded residents about the winter parking ban and to move their cars off the streets. The deputies do not like giving citations and want to make it easy for Public Works to do their jobs safely and effectively. Sergeant Harrell stated that Chief Wiley is not here tonight but reminded residents to shovel fire hydrants out when it snows. Mayor Elliott asked Sergeant Harrell to review the parking restrictions. Sergeant Harrell stated there is no parking on public streets between 2:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. from November 1st to April 1st. There is also no parking on the streets if the snow is over two inches and anytime a snow emergency is declared.

8. FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

No formal report.

9. ENGINEER'S REPORT

A. MOU- Underground BMP SWWD

City Engineer Jon Herdegen stated we have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with South Washington Watershed District (SWWD) to contribute funds to their stormwater BMP (best management practice). They are bidding for a project to be constructed next year for a vortex grit chamber to remove sediment from the storm water before reaching the Mississippi River, which will be constructed on 16th and Cedar. This agreement goes back to another MOU that the City and SWWD executed following the approval of the new City Hall building. One of SWWD requirements is limiting the total amount of phosphorus that discharges from a newly developed site. That requirement was difficult to reach since we have high bedrock. SWWD said we could use an alternative compliance schedule and set aside money to build another BMP within the drainage area to satisfy that requirement and were given 10 years to comply. We had originally planned to do a pond in one of our rights-of-way's before reaching the Mississippi River. Throughout the process of their design for their new BMP on 16th and Cedar they asked if would consider contributing to their project which will remove phosphorus and our contribution could help buy down that cost for them. The agreement is to also contribute the funds that Wilson Trucking Lines had set aside in escrow because they were having a challenging time meeting that same requirement. The MOU is for the city to contribute \$5,700 and allocate the \$22,440 from Wilson Trucking for a total amount of \$28,140. Engineer Herdegen stated their attorney still needs to review, but he is looking for approval from Council.

Member Chapdelaine motioned to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the Cities of Newport and the South Washington Watershed District pending Legal Review. Seconded by Member Ingemann. Approved 5-0.

10. SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

Superintendent of Public Works Matt Yokiell thanked Sergeant Harrell for reminding residents about snow emergencies and stated those are automatically enacted at two inches of snow. Superintendent Yokiell stated they are still working on the library windows and expect the windows to be completed by the end of the year. There will be painting and trim to finish when the weather is warmer. Superintendent Yokiell stated as early as next week contractors plan to start removing ash trees that are infected with emerald ash borer using a grant that was secured through the DNR. These are for trees in the rights-of-way and parks. If they are in front of a resident's house, they will try and knock first and/or leave a letter. In the spring they will replant trees in place of the ones removed and residents should call Public Works with any questions. Superintendent Yokiell stated they saw a VAC truck like the one they will be receiving this year. This will be an excellent improvement for maintaining our sewer systems. Mayor Elliott reminded folks this is a partnership with St. Paul Park and the Watershed District for a half million-dollar piece of equipment. Newport and St. Paul Park are each putting in about \$100,000 and the Watershed is paying the rest. Newport will be using our American Recovery Act Funds to pay for this.

11. ADMINISTRATION REPORT

A. Public Hearing- Truth-In-Taxation (6:00 p.m.)

City Administrator Joe Hatch presented to Council on the proposed 2023 property tax levy and budget. This year we had another decrease in local government aid which had a significant impact on our levy and property taxes for our residents. The general fund budget breakdown is 35% for police & fire, 16% for streets, 15% for parks & recreation, 33% general government, and 1% contingency. Fiscal disparities will increase by \$12,053 in 2023. Newport has a great bond rating of AA stable form Standard & Poor's. Our fund balance as a percent of expenditures is 61.6%, which is exceptionally good as our goal is to have our fund balance at 50%. The proposed levy for 2023 is 7.11%. The tax impact on a median valued home of \$282,000 is \$120.38 per year or \$10.03 per month. Mayor Elliott stated this is a higher percentage than Council would like and if the LGA had come through we would be looking at less than a four percent levy increase.

Mayor Elliott opened the Truth in Taxation public hearing at 6:23 p.m. on December 1, 2022.

Pauline Schottmuller, residing at 97 10th Street, addressed the Council. Ms. Schottmuller stated she appreciated the mayor meeting with Matt Klein and Rick Hansen to discuss the LGA because they had a record state surplus. Ms. Schottmuller inquired if the city's high fund balance could be a reason we do not get as much LGA. Mayor Elliott does not believe so as Senator Bigham had within the bill for us to not only maintain our 2022 LGA amount, but to have an inflationary adjustment of \$30,000, for a total of \$105,000. Unfortunately, that bill did not get approved. Ms. Schottmuller stated her property taxes go up each year and it has become unsustainable in her budget. Last year she had to budget \$500 per month to pay her tax bill, and this year she will have to budget about \$550 per month. Ms. Schottmuller stated there is so many important things the city is doing, but she does not think it is enough for what she is paying. Ms. Schottmuller wants her neighborhood to look descent and inquired if we are moving to West St. Paul for code enforcement. Administrator Hatch stated we signed a contract with West St. Paul for building inspections, code enforcement, and rental inspections that will be effective on January 1st. Ms. Schottmuller stated we need economic development, and we need a City Administrator who is well versed in economic development because we do a poor job and have had too many missed opportunities, such as the Kwik Trip. Ms. Schottmuller stated we need to do a better job communicating what is going on in the city. The city is doing excellent work, and she hopes we will get it out there with public engagement and transparency. Mayor Elliott clarified that the \$550 a month Ms. Schottmuller mentioned is not just the city taxes, as it is her total property tax bill between the various taxing jurisdictions. The city portion will be less than what is listed on the proposed tax notification after the final levy is voted on December 15th.

Administrative Hatch stated he appreciated Ms. Schottmuller's comments and understands the importance of community and the priorities from the Council.

Bill Sumner, residing at 737 21st Street, addressed the Council. Mr. Sumner stated as a Council member elect, he will inherit a budget that he cannot personally vote on and anytime there is an increase it will impact every one of us. Mr. Sumner loves Newport and will continue to be involved because of his desire to make this a terrific place to live. He thanked Council for the work they have done and looks forward to making sure every dollar is spent effectively, reasonably, and correctly. Mr. Sumner feels it is important to be involved with our legislators because that is where the money allocated to correcting the big problems in Newport will need to come from. He thanked Member Taylor for leading a strong initiative to let the communities know how much Newport Elementary means to us. Mr. Sumner stated every person in Newport has the option to come to any meeting as they are not closed or restricted. There is unfortunately a lack of interest to physically participate but encouraged residents to get involved and make their concerns and suggestions available to Council.

Mayor Elliott closed the Truth in Taxation public hearing at 6:51 p.m. on December 1, 2022.

Mayor Elliott stated we have the great fortune of representative Hansen as he is one of the most well-versed representatives at the state understanding I/I issues specifically as it relates to Newport. He has been pushing to get state funding to deal with these large I/I issues.

B. Resolution No 2022-46- Assessment of Delinquent Accounts

Administrator Hatch stated we have a Resolution directing the City Administrator to certify unpaid water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, and street lighting charges to the County to be collected with other taxes on these properties. There is an attachment in the packet that lists out the accounts and the balances that the city would be assessing.

Member Chapdelaine motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2022-46 – Assessment of Delinquent Accounts. Seconded by Member Taylor. Approved 5-0.

Administrator Hatch stated Newport's staff met with the City of West St. Paul yesterday as they will be taking over our inspection services. They discussed building inspections, code enforcement, and rental inspections. Administrator Hatch feels this will be a great partnership with West St. Paul. Administrator Hatch stated that yesterday he attended his first Washington County Administrators meeting where he got to meet several administrators from surrounding cities. They talked about their levies and their TNT hearings. Administrator Hatch stated he was invited to the Public Works building and had lunch with the staff. He feels it went very well and stated we have a talented group of workers and thanked them for welcoming him.

12. MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS

Mayor Elliott stated earlier this week she along with Member Chapdelaine and Administrator Hatch met with the new legislators. Newport has a new state senator, a new state representative, and a new federal representative. Senator Karla Bigham participated in this meeting to help with the transition, and ensure the new representatives understand Newport's issues. They discussed legislative priorities, with the top priority being our I/I issue. There were two bills introduced last year with one bill over six million dollars and the other bill over five million dollars. Mayor Elliott is very hopeful these legislators will push hard for funding for Newport. They also discussed our loss of approximately \$75,000 in local government aid and how that effects our budget. Mayor Elliott stated the Woodbury Park and Rec catalog came out and reminded residents they can participate in these recreation programs at the Woodbury resident rates.

Member Johnson welcomed a new volunteer to the library, Stephanie. On December 10th from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. there is a winter market and holiday gathering at the library. There will be at least four vendors and entertainment throughout the event. On December 19th through December 22nd there is a holiday ornament craft you can make at the library. If you are interested in volunteering at the library, they are looking for help with peer tutoring which is now done by appointment. Thanks to Sara-Marie's family and the Rahm family for helping with peer tutoring.

Member Taylor stated the Steve Cozad Memorial Food and Toy Drive is ongoing with collections at the Cloverleaf Bar and the North Pole. On Sunday, December 4th the Fire Department will be at the Newport Center from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. taking donations as well as checks made out to the Friends in Need Food Shelf. Member Taylor stated Steve Cozad started this food and toy drive in 1999 and passed away in 2017. Mr. Cozad was truly kind and soft-spoken, and this event was near and dear to him. The Newport Fire Department wants to carry this tradition forward.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Member Chapdelaine motioned to adjourn the City Council Meeting. Seconded by Member Johnson. Approved 5-0.

The City Council Meeting was adjourned at 6:56 p.m. on December 1, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted:
Jill Thiesfeld,
Administrative Assistant II

Signed: _____
Laurie Elliott, Mayor