

AITKIN CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

AITKIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

October 7, 2024

6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Interim Mayor Gary Tibbitts, Council Members Chris Dotzler, Jason Henke, Julie Miller & Kathy Galliger

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Street Supervisor Lon Nicko, Police Chief Colter Riedel, Kat Robb, Dan Stifter, Tami Jacobs, Megan Workman

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- A motion to approve the agenda was made by Chris Dotzler, seconded by Julie Miller. The motion carried with all voting aye.

CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were included in the consent agenda:

- Minutes – Regular Council Meeting 9/16/2024
- Accounts Payable
 - City
 - Liquor Store
- MnDOT 2024/2025 Snow Removal Agreement

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Kathy Galliger, seconded by Jason Henke. Motion carried with all voting aye.

PUBLIC HEARING

- **None.**

MAYOR'S REPORT

- Interim Mayor Tibbitts presented a certificate of appreciation to former Mayor Megan Workman for her service to the city from January 2021 to August of 2024.

ADMINISTRATION REPORT

- The liquor store has undergone a few minor updates, including a fresh coat of trim paint and a newly refaced sign above the door.
- The Police, Street and Fire Departments all participated in the Career Fair put on by JET at the Aitkin High School on September 26, 2024.
- The Beanery will be hosting a meet the Candidates event on Tuesday, October 15th – 5:00 to 6:00.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Catlin Litigation**
 - Payment for the court judgment dated April 18, 2024, in the amount of \$37,531.56 is due. Jason Henke moved to approve the payment, and Chris Dotzler seconded the motion. Councilmember Galliger expressed her belief that the ruling is unjust, although she understands that payment is mandatory. The motion carried, with Dotzler, Henke, and Miller voting aye, and Galliger voting against.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Aitkin ISD #1**
 - Superintendent Dan Stifter provided an update to the council regarding discussions about building a new school on district-owned property at the south end of the city. He noted that numerous public input sessions and meetings with planning staff have taken place to explore moving the project forward. The school is currently working on compiling cost estimates to assess feasibility.

On September 11, 2024, a meeting was held involving School Planning Staff, Superintendent Stifter, City Planner, City Engineer, Street Supervisor Lon Nicko, Public Utilities Manager Dave Cluff, City Administrator Jen Thompson, and Interim Mayor Tibbitts to discuss planning and project details. The school planning staff requested cost estimates for the necessary utility extensions.

Following that meeting, City Engineer Phil Martin submitted a proposal for \$2,150 to evaluate the immediate utility extension to the school property from Highway 169, as well as potential future improvements along 6th Ave SE, should the area develop. These preliminary engineering services would yield high-level planning and cost estimates beneficial to both the city and the school district.

Jason Henke moved to approve the proposal, splitting the cost of \$2,150 equally between ISD #1 and the City, and Kathy Galliger seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting aye.

- **Aitkin Public Utilities/City Agreement**

- The council reviewed the 2025 agreement between the City of Aitkin and Aitkin Public Utilities for approval. A notable change in the agreement is an increase of \$12,000 in the transfer to the city's general fund by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). Julie Miller made a motion to approve the agreement, which was seconded by Jason Henke. The motion carried with all voting aye.

- **Resolution No. 2024-10-07A**

- Resolution No. 2024-10-07A, accepting a \$2,500 donation from Riverwood Healthcare Center for the Wayfinding project, was presented for approval. The council expressed its gratitude, noting that community support is appreciated.

- **Personnel Policy**

- The personnel policy has been updated to reflect three noteworthy changes: 1. Changing the term “Smoking” to “Tobacco Use”; 2. Adding Juneteenth, as federally required, to the list of holidays; and 3. Clarifying that Paid Time Off (PTO) applies only to regular full-time non-union employees. The revisions have been reviewed by City Labor Attorney Maggie Penland. Kathy Galliger made a motion to approve the Personnel Policy updated as of October 7, 2024, which was seconded by Chris Dotzler. The motion carried with all voting aye.

- **Cannabis – Retail Limit**

- The planning commission has been working on a Cannabis ordinance. Minnesota Statutes section 342.13 grants local governments the authority to limit the number of cannabis retailers, microbusinesses with a retail operations endorsement, and mezzo businesses with a retail operations endorsement. The law mandates at least one retail location for every 12,500 residents. For our city, which has a population of 0 to 12,500, this means we must allow at least one retail location. Local governments can also issue more registrations than the minimum required.

City Administrator Thompson requested the council to decide whether to limit the number of retail registrations. After discussion, Julie Miller moved to table the decision until the October 21 council meeting to allow for further consideration. The motion was seconded by Kathy Galliger. Motion carried with all voting aye.

- **Liquor Store – Hire**

- Liquor Store Manager Sam Keil and City Administrator Jen Thompson interviewed Jason Pierce for the position of part-time liquor store clerk (14 hours per week or less) and recommended hiring him. Julie Miller moved to extend a conditional offer for the position at Grade SS5, Step 1 (\$14.79 on the 2024 Wage Scale), contingent upon a background check. The motion was seconded by Jason Henke. The motion carried with all voting aye.

- **Aitkin PD – Department Update**

- Police Chief Riedel presented and discussed the department's activity report for January through September 2024.
- The department is fully staffed, with new hires having completed their training and staff is working well together.
- A personal development program has been implemented to help officers grow in areas of interest.
- Chief Riedel shared information about the Toward Zero Death (TZD) program, which the department participates in. Minnesota TZD is the state's traffic safety program that utilizes the collaboration of law enforcement agencies to reduce traffic crashes, injuries, and fatalities on Minnesota roads.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

- **None.**

PLANNING & ZONING

- **Draft Minutes – 9/23/2024 Mtg. Minutes**

BUDGET COMMITTEE

- **None.**

PARK COMMITTEE

- **None.**

LIBRARY BOARD

- **None.**

-

AIRPORT COMMISSION

- **Draft Minutes – 9/25/2024 Mtg.**

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

- **None.**

EDA

- **None.**

COMMENTS

- Street Supervisor Nicko reminded everyone that it is leaf season and that yard waste does not belong in the street. Residents need to utilize the Aitkin County compost site near the landfill south of town.

ADJOURNMENT

- A motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 pm was made by Chris Dotzler, seconded by Kathy Galliger. The motion carried with all voting aye.

X 

Gary Tibbitts
Mayor

X 

Jennifer Thompson
City Administrator