

AITKIN CITY COUNCIL MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
AITKIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

December 2, 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, Fire Chief Brian Pisarek, Justin Cartie, Kat Robb, & Stan Gustafson.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**CONSENT AGENDA**

The following items were included in the consent agenda:

- Minutes – Regular Council Meeting 11/18/2024
- Accounts Payable
  - City
  - Liquor Store
- CLA 2024 Audit Services -Statement of Work
- Bolton & Menk – City Planning Services Contract
- Aitkin PUC – Appointment Scott Sherman

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

**PUBLIC HEARING**

- None.

**MAYOR'S REPORT**

**ADMINISTRATION REPORT**

- Mayor Tibbitts called the Truth-in-Taxation Hearing to order at 6:02. Thompson explained that the preliminary levy, set on September 16, 2024, was established at a 9.39% increase. Since then, staff has reviewed their department budgets in detail. Notable changes from the preliminary levy include a \$12,000 increase in the transfer from Aitkin Public Utilities, lower-than-expected 2025 health insurance costs, and a \$15,000 contribution from Aitkin Public Schools to the Aitkin Police Department budget to help offset wages for the school resource officer. The proposed final levy increase is 6.82%, representing a \$132,545 increase over 2024.

Mayor Tibbitts called for comments from the public. None were heard. No written comments had been received as of the time of the meeting. The Truth-in-Taxation Hearing was closed at 6:10 p.m.

A motion to approve Resolution No. 2024-12-02A Adoption of the 2025 Final Tax Levy was made by Julie Miller, seconded by Jason Henke. The motion carried with all voting aye.

A motion to approve Resolution No. 2024-12-02B Adoption of 2025 Final Tax Levy & Budget was made by Chris Dotzler, seconded by Julie Miller. The motion carried with all voting aye.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- **INH Properties, Bunker Hill Housing of Aitkin, LLC – Request to Extend Tax Abatement**
- A letter from INH Properties was received, providing an update to the council on the status of the workforce housing apartment complex on Bunker Hill Dr. In his letter, Jim

Illies of INH informed the council that the MHFA had recently awarded the WHDP Deferred Loan to the City for the project. Despite these subsidies, they have faced unexpected challenges in the debt and equity markets. As a result, they have been exploring additional incentive programs, including those from IRRRB and the USDA. Construction cannot begin until all necessary components are in place. Therefore, they are requesting an extension of the Tax Abatement agreement to a project start date of June 2025, with a completion date of December 31, 2026.

A motion to approve the extension was made by Chris Dotzler, seconded by Jason Henke. The motion carried with all voting aye.

- **Aitkin PD – Out of State Training**
  - Chief Riedel requested council approval for two of his officers to attend an out-of-state Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) School. The program and travel expenses are covered by the MN Office of Traffic Safety, with the city responsible only for the officers' wages and meal expenses. A motion to approve the request was made by Jason Henke, seconded by Kathy Galliger. The motion carried with all voting aye.

- **Snow Season; Restricted Parking & Sidewalk Clearing**
  - Street Supervisor Nicko reminded everyone of the parking restrictions and the sidewalk snow removal requirements within the city.

#### **PUBLIC WORKS**

- 12/09/2024 Meeting was canceled.

#### **PLANNING & ZONING**

- 11/20/2024 Draft Planning & Zoning Mtg. Minutes
- Ordinance No. 412 & 413
  - Ordinance No. 412 Regulating Cannabis Oriented Business and Land Use in the City of Aitkin was presented to the council for approval.
  - Ordinance No. 413 Amending the Official Zoning Code Text of the City of Aitkin Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance was presented to the council for approval.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on Ordinance No. 412 & 413 at the November 20, 2024 meeting. No comments were heard from the public and no written comments were received. A motion to approve Ordinance No. 412 & 413 both with Summary for publication was made by Jason Henke, seconded by Chris Dotzler. The motion carried with all voting aye.

#### **BUDGET COMMITTEE**

- None.

#### **PARK COMMITTEE**

- Fieldhouse – Flooring Discussion
  - A flooring issue has been noted at the fieldhouse. The rubber floor tiles have gaps in the seams and some of the tiles are thicker than others causing height irregularities. Nicko and Thompson have been in discussion with Andy Basarra of Baratto Bros. Andy has contacted the installer and flooring manufacturer. There is potential that the manufacturer may make a settlement offer to accept as-is. Thompson asked council how they would like to proceed should an offer be made. Discussion was had, a motion to move forward with a full replacement at no cost to the city was made by Jason Henke, seconded by Kathy Galliger. The motion carried with all voting aye.

#### **LIBRARY BOARD**

- None.

#### **AIRPORT COMMISSION**

- None.

#### **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

- The personnel committee has completed interviews for the City Clerk position and makes a recommendation to hire Samantha Sass. A motion to extend the employment offer at a Grade PM1, Step 1 contingent on a background check was made by Chris Dotzler, seconded by Julie Miller. The motion carried with all voting aye.

**EDA**


- A special meeting has been called for 12/4/2024 to discuss ISD #1 request to participate in the cost of a lobbyist group.


**COMMENTS**

- None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

- A motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 pm was made by Chris Dotzler, seconded by Julie Miller. The motion carried with all voting aye.

**X**   
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Gary Tibbitts  
Mayor

**X**   
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Jennifer Thompson  
City Administrator

