

Mayor Edwards called the meeting to order on February 8, 2016 at 6 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were: Mayor Connie Edwards, Cheryl Sanden, Matt Schutte, Kevin Knutson and Tony Schultz. Also present were: Chris Peterson, Audrey Hegland, Randy Thesing, Ed Jacobs, Ellyn Baumann, Jay Wheaton, and Connie Verse.

Public Comment: None. Agenda Item K was moved to the head of the Agenda.

Flood Levee – Draft Recertification Report: Jay Wheaton provided an overview of progress to date regarding the FEMA-required recertification of the levee, which is a three-phase process. FEMA is updating flood maps and as such, the land behind the levees would be protected by it being a provisionally accredited levee (PAL), designation on the Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map (DFIRM) on October 7, 2014. The City must submit data and documentation to FEMA that all levee components are still functioning and meet all FEMA regulations. Once done, the levee will be accredited by FEMA and shown on National Flood Insurance Program maps which reflect appropriate risk zones for levee-impacted areas.

In his summary, Wheaton reported that Phase I and Phase II have been completed, all the necessary information has been collected, the condition of the levee embankment and foundation soils verified, and elevations ascertained. One deficiency identified is that there has been some settlement (loss of freeboard) of approximately 4-6 inches in two locations. In Phase III, Mead & Hunt will work with the City to determine exact costs to raise the levee to meet the FEMA Freeboard requirements.

Wheaton noted that part of Hwy 76 is still under debate as to whether the City is responsible for this section. When the Corps designed the levee, they tied into Hwy 76 in lieu of building a parallel levee. The City does not have easements over Hwy 76.

Resolution in support of Increasing Local Government Aid: MOTION BY SCHULTZ, SECONDED BY SCHUTTE TO SUPPORT THE RESOLUTION TO INCREASE THE BASE APPROPRIATION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AID \$45.5 MILLION, EFFECTIVE FOR AID PAYABLE IN 2017 AND URGES ADOPTION OF THIS PROPOSAL BY THE HOUSE AND SENATE; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. Peterson and Schultz will attend the Legislation Action Day on March 16 on behalf of the City.

Resolution to write off ambulance charges: The City's billing agency attempts to collect unpaid ambulance charges; if it cannot, then the City has two alternatives; either write the debts off or turn the charges over to a collection agency. No action was taken at this time. Peterson noted that other services free of charge are available from the vendor.

Emerald Ash Borer: The ash trees in Houston are becoming widely affected by the ash borer; eventually all the diseased trees will have to be taken down as they become brittle and represent a safety hazard. The current policy is that if a public tree is condemned by the City's Tree Inspector, the City will cover 50% of the removal cost, with the remaining 50% to be paid by the adjoining landowner. The City has increased its budget for tree removal for this year and expects it will be necessary to further increase it next year, given the number of trees anticipated for removal. Mayor Edwards questioned whether there is a plan in place by the Tree Board regarding replacing the trees as they are removed. This will be on the Tree Board's next agenda for discussion.

Thesing stated there are two very large ash trees in the City Park that are diseased and need to be taken down before they get to the brittle stage. He would like to get quotes on the removal, as it is a costly process. Schutte suggested part of the trunks be saved if possible and then used to create carved wood sculptures done by a local artist.

Nature Center Computer (s): Peterson referred to the 2013 computer assessment and stated that the Nature Center's computer is due for replacement. Peterson requested permission to order the replacement which in total will cost approximately \$1,000. MOTION BY SANDEN, SECONDED BY SCHUTTE TO AUTHORIZE PETERSON TO ORDER

A NEW LAPTOP FOR THE NATURE CENTER, AT A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$1,000; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Summer Maintenance Help: Request was made by Peterson for permission to advertise for applications for summer maintenance help. MOTION BY SCHUTTE, SECONDED BY SCHULTZ TO ADVERTISE FOR THE NEEDED SUMMER MAINTENANCE HELP; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Advertise Marketing/Chamber Position: Peterson requested permission to advertise for a part-time combined City Marketing/Chamber position, stating the intent is to plan is to hire someone to work on City marketing and also with the Chamber. The Chamber will reimburse the City the cost of the shared salary; previously the Council committed up to \$4,000 annually for this position. Currently the City's marketing has been done by Taylor Laschenski, who will be leaving when she graduates from college in the spring of this year. Peterson explained that each position will have its own job description, and that it is important to find someone who will fill this role on a long-term basis. Applications will come to City Hall and interviews will be held by the Personnel Committee. MOTION BY SANDEN, SECONDED BY KNUTSON TO ADVERTISE FOR THE PART-TIME COMBINED CITY MARKETING & CHAMBER POSITION; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Off-Highway Vehicle Project – Advisory Committee: The next step for the OHV project is to form a Community Advisory Committee, which should include one or two Council members and consist of a wide variety of expertise. Schutte volunteered to work with Peterson on the Committee. An application will be created and available at City Hall for interested persons. Peterson recommended the Council consider employing a facilitator who has expertise in this area to moderate the meetings, and also include input assistance and from the DNR, as well as other cities who already have similar advisory committees. The facilitator would be paid with extra funds in the OHV account. Committee membership and recommendations will be brought to the City Council for approval.

2016 Flowers: Last year the City sponsored spring flower baskets that were hung on the downtown light poles. It was decided to do this again this year, and Mayor Connie and Sanden have volunteered to once again water each one in the early mornings. MOTION MADE BY KNUTSON, SECONDED BY SCHULTZ TO PURCHASE THE SAME FLOWER BASKETS AS LAST YEAR, TO COST \$25 EACH; MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Resolution – Building Code Fee for starting without permit: The Basic Code states that anyone who starts work on a project without the necessary permit will be charged a double permit fee. Peterson recommends this amount be formally established and added to the permit fee process, in hopes it will encourage people to obtain a permit when required. MOTION BY SCHULTZ, SECONDED BY SCHUTTE TO APPROVE ADDING THE DOUBLE PERMIT FEE TO THE PERMIT PROCESS; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Training – Wastewater Operations Conference: Thesing will attend the three-day wastewater operations conference in Brooklyn Park as part of his required continuing education certification credits, additional required training hours, and also to personally receive a Wastewater Treatment Facility Operational Award that Houston has received. MOTION TO APPROVE THESING'S ATTENDANCE AT THE THREE-DAY WASTEWATER OPERATIONS CONFERENCE; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Minutes: MOTION BY SCHULTZ, SECONDED BY KNUTSON TO APPROVE THE JANUARY MINUTES; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Financial Report/Review of Bills: MOTION BY SCHULTZ, SECONDED BY SANDEN TO PAY THE BILLS; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

2016 Pay Equity Report: Every three years this report must be submitted to the MN Management and Budget as per MN statute; as per Peterson, it was submitted on January 31, 2016.

Department Reports:

Fire Department: Minutes in packet for Council's review.

Nature Center: Connie Verse stated she is preparing the Nature Center's summer schedule and the children's Winter/Spring programming is under way and going well.

Maintenance: Thesing said Chief Breault has been filling in to assist with snowplowing when needed.

City Administrator: An informative City newsletter was created and sent out to all homeowners regarding the many projects that are underway in Houston, including the recent water/sewer rate increase. Extra copies are available and will be provided to anyone who did not receive the newsletter but would be interested.

Homeland Security and Emergency Management Training: Mayor Edwards encouraged Council members to attend the "Keeping Minnesota Ready" training for elected officials and senior leaders. It provides valuable information as to their role during an emergency.

MOTION BY SCHULTZ, SECONDED BY KNUTSON TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:30 PM; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.