

**City of Bigfork**  
**Regular City Council Meeting**  
**September 10, 2024**  
**5:30 p.m.**

Members Present: Amy Pifher, Sarah Scheff, Samantha Olson, Jerry Denny,  
Members Absent: Ben Maxa  
Also Present: Aaron Gould, Caleb Strandlie, Drew Francisco, Charlie & Jessica Hazard, Al Anseheu, Randy Collins, Matt Shermoen, Sally Sedgwick, Jeremey Schwarze,

Acting Mayor Denny called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Amy Pifher Sworn in as mayor by City Clerk Melissa David.

The pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The Public Forum was opened.

As no one else wished to address the Council, the public forum was closed.

**Add Fire Fighting Insurance & New Fire OSHA Regulations after Widseth. Motion by Denny to approve the agenda, seconded by Scheff, motion carried unanimously (MCU).**

**Consent Agenda: Motion by Denny, seconded by Olson, and MCU to approve the consent agenda including:**

1. Minutes of the July 9, 2024, Regular City Council meeting,
2. City Clerk's office report for July & August 2024,
3. Financial report for July & August 2024,
4. Public Works Department Report for July & August 2024,
5. Payroll and timecards for July 5, 2024, and July 19, 2024, regular payrolls, in the amount of \$10,319.18.  
Payroll and timecards for August 2, 2024, August 16, 2024, and August 30, 2024, in the amount of \$13,473.02.
6. Claims paid from July & August 2024, in the amount of \$65,441.90 and claims for payment in the amount of \$38,114.24.

**IEDC Presentation:** Matt from IEDC attended to present to the council a recap and overview of who IEDC is and what they do. A partner of IEDC, the Small Business Development Committee SBDC in 2024 has had 89 new client registrations, with 10 new or bought business. They have a total of 146 clients, creating 124 plus jobs. One major business that has affected this area, that SBDC has worked with is the Timberwolf Inn. Another local business they have worked with is T

& T Dog Lodge. The IEDC has also created an expansion called The Forge, this is a building in Grand Rapids that will offer college credited classes from MN North College to high school students for welding, sheet metal, wood working, and other trades professions. Thrive Up North is also partnered with IEDC to help showcase new employees that come to the area to help promote and welcome new workers to Itasca County. IEDC also takes part in a lot of Community Outreach programs within the county to help connect the Leech lake tribe with the whole of Itasca County. CEDA also works hand and hand with IEDC to help community development in rural areas. CEDA serves 34 communities and counting. The IEDC vision is to provide a diverse and growing economy that supports equitable opportunities for all of Itasca County. The mission is to grow Itasca County through education, research, and engagement fostering business and economic opportunities. A huge focus for IEDC is to remove the barriers for our growing economy and look at working with other counties and states to bring improvements locally. Currently IEDC is working on an Energy Transition Project to show how this impacts everyone moving forward, while power plants are reenergized and reemployed. IEDC will be back to Bigfork to talk more on the Energy Transition Topic on October 15<sup>th</sup>, more information on this presentation will be posted as soon as it is available.

**Widseth Scope Presentation:** Caleb & Jeremy attended to update the city on the PER Study for the water tower project. The environmental report that Widseth is working on is going to require an archaeological report to be included. This report is required and involves taking soil samples from areas surrounding the HWY 38 bridge, the samples will help determine if there are any contaminants in the area the new water mains will be placed. Widseth provided a proposal for this at the total \$3,752.61, from Duluth Archaeology Center. **Motion to Approve the Review/ Survey of Two Bore Hole Locations as proposed by Widseth by Duluth Archaeology Center in the amount of \$3,752.61 by Denny, seconded by Pifher, and MCU.**

Caleb and Jeremy also spoke regarding the area that community members have requested be vacated on 3<sup>rd</sup> street. The constituents have requested that the City Street Right of way be narrowed as it currently lies on a small section of their established yard. Caleb will set up a Teams meeting to discuss this further with Public Works Manager Aaron Gould, Amy Pifher and Melissa David.

**Fire Fighters Insurance:** Chief Drew Francisco attended the meeting to discuss additional insurance for the members if they were to get insured on the job or at a call. The insurance would cost \$10 per member a year. He is looking for permission to move forward with this. Denny mentioned that as long as this extra cost is included in the fire department's budget then he sees no issue with adding the insurance. The council all agreed.

**New Fire Department OSHA Regulations:** Chief Drew Francisco stated that the Fire Department has recently been notified by OSHA that they have created new regulations for all fire departments. These regulations have an additional 700 pages compared to previous regulations. Drew is worried that because we are a small department, the new regulations will become very costly for the city as the requirements state that the department would need to update a lot of the currently used equipment. Drew did state that him and a few other chiefs of the surrounding

departments attended the last OSHA meeting that was hosted in Grand Rapids to discuss how these regulations are going to negatively impact the small and rural departments due to no time to begin implementing these regulations. Drew also stressed that part of the new regulations includes OSHA training for the chiefs, captains and assistant chiefs. The city will be forced to come up with plans in the budget, along with the Fire department's budget, to pay for this training. Training could potentially cost \$4,000 per member, there are currently 9 officers in the department. Drew is going to continue to meet with OSHA to further the discussion on how this is going to impact smaller fire departments. In the meantime, Drew will forward the new regulations to the city for their review.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Public Hearing for Areas Surrounding 4<sup>th</sup> Street:** The Public Hearing for Vacating City Street Right of way by areas surrounding 4<sup>th</sup> street was opened. Jessica and Charlie Hazzard have requested the area be vacated due to the property lines going directly through Sam's Place. As no one wished to speak against vacating the area the public hearing was closed. A formal resolution to vacate will be presented at the October council meeting.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

**RESOLUTION 2024-10: Declaring Planning Commission Vacancies: Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-10 Declaring Planning Commission Vacancies by Olson, seconded by Denny, and MCU.**

**2025 Budget & Levy Proposal:** The Budget committee met in August to discuss and plan the 2025 Budget. The city in 2023 was not negative as a whole, the streetlight fund however was negative, which is why the city decided in February to raise the streetlight fee. The budget committee did discuss the possibility of raising the streetlight fee again in 2025 but will open this up for community input come January. The largest change to the budget this year is the general fund designation. The Budget committee has decided to cease any additional funds to the walk trail as there is currently \$27,500.00 in this fund, along with the funds the Bigfork Valley Community Foundation has set aside for any maintenance to the trail. The committee has also decided not to put any more funds into the police department fund. There is currently \$21,000.00 in this fund. They talked about the unlikelihood of being able to amass the sum needed to start a local department and discussed that those funds can be used to help our fire department moving forward, this is still up for discussion and the funds will not be moved until the council has officially voted on the use of them. The committee did allocate \$7,000 to the public works equipment fund, \$10,000 to the alleyway fund, \$5,000 to the City Hall Maintenance fund for a new furnace and water heater, and they created a fund for the Airport mound system as it will likely need some pump replacements before the Cook's are able to utilize the mound. **Motion to accept the 2025 Budget Proposal by Olson, seconded by Denny, and MCU.**

**RESOLUTION 2024-11: Adopting the Preliminary 2025 Budget & Levy for Taxes Collectible in 2025:** The Preliminary Budget 2025 was presented:

#### **FUND**

General: \$324,150.00  
Fire: \$207,616.00

Streetlight: \$13,500.00  
2013A GO Utility Revenue: \$56,213.00  
2013A Go Tax Abatement: \$16,317.50  
Water: \$169,240.00  
Sewer: \$109,280.00

The Preliminary Levy for 2025 was presented:

SOURCE

2020A GO Tax Abatements: \$14,241.25  
2020A GO Tax Levies: \$2,076.25  
General: \$186,293.20  
TOTAL \$202,610.70

This is a 0.57% decrease from 2024.

**Motion to accept Resolution 2024-11 Adopting the Preliminary 2025 Budget & Levy for the Taxes Collectible in 2025 by Denny, seconded by Olson, and MCU.**

**OTHER/ ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Next Council meeting is October 8, 2024, at 5:30 PM at Bigfork City Hall

Miller McDonald is still working on the 2023 Audit report to be submitted to OSA. Melissa has been reaching out to them to hopefully get this submitted no later than September 30, 2024.

Community Development Grant: Tim Johnson has given a breakdown of community development grant funding received through the NIJPB and the BFVCF. The sum of the grant is \$41,500.00. This funding has been allocated for continued construction at the Bigfork City Softball Field, Maintenance needed at the Skating Rink, Community Riding Arena, Bigfork School Forest Improvements, and additional playground equipment for toddlers at the City Park.

**Motion to adjourn at 6:36 p.m. by Pifher, seconded by Scheff, and MCU.**

Melissa J. David

*City Clerk/Treasurer*

Approved at the regular meeting held on  
October 8, 2024

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Mayor