

City of Long Prairie
7:00 P.M., Monday February 5, 2024
City Council Meeting Held in Person & Via-Teleconference

The Long Prairie City Council met in person and by phone at City Hall, 7:00 pm, on Monday February 5, 2024, Acting Mayor David Wright called the meeting to order with Council members Jim Kreemer, Clint Krueger, and Lilah Gripne present. Others present were Deputy Clerk Deb Laumeyer, Police Chief Ryan Hanson, Fire Chief Dan Laumeyer, Doug Becker, Bruce Oftedahl, Linzey Gerads, Jacob Fisher, Deborah Fisher, JoAnn Schroeder, Jen Steinmetz, Darla John, Veronica Monti, Jon Chase, Charlie Reichert, Lauren Hebert, Matthew Holt, Otis Ostendorf, Jeremy Sovich, Josh Meyer, Pete Nelson, Josh Spieker, Bob Kunz, Elaine Kunz, Jody Bebault, Dan Bebault, Sara Meis, Becky Meis, Gerald Meis, Sharon Sovich, Dave Sovich, Steve Hinson, Amanda Hinson, Kevin Klimek, Nancy Waitkus, Marika Olivier, Audrey Stevens, Brian Newville, Wally Zastrow, Tanja Levin, Bob Byers, Tyler Graves, Bob Klick, Chris Haasser, Enos Swartzentruber, Luan Thomas- Brunckhorst, Rick Barhorst, Rita Barhorst, Trevor Larson, Daiv Freeman, Ritsuko Freeman

Council member Gripne motioned Krueger seconded to approve the consent agenda:

- (a) Approve Agenda for February 5, 2024.**
- (b) Approve Donations Resolution 24-02-05-02.**

Resolution #24-02-05-02

RESOLUTION ACKNOWLEDGING DONATIONS

Said resolution is on file at City Hall and may be viewed Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Explanation of the closed meeting from the January 16, 2024 meeting. The City Administrator had asked for a performance review that evening, so the Council closed the meeting at that time and after that meeting, the result was that the Administrator was granted a leave of absence for two weeks.

The Council reviewed the resolution accepting the resignation of Mayor Jodi Dixon.

Council member Gripne moved seconded by Krueger to accept Resolution 24-02-05-03 to accept Jodi Dixon’s resignation and declare a vacancy. Council member Kreemer thanked Jodi for her years of service as Mayor. Motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 24-02-05-03

A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING RESIGNATION AND DECLARING A VACANCY.

Said resolution is on file at City Hall and may be viewed Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

The Council reviewed the resignation letter from City Administrator/Clerk Ted Gray. Gray requested to move to a part-time schedule to assist in day-to-day activities. This would be at a reduced wage of \$35.00/hour, earn ESST at the part-time rate of .0333 hours earned per hours worked. Remain on the City's health insurance until my replacement can be hired and on board. Gray expressed gratitude to all the staff, colleagues and friendships that have come from being in the position.

Wright stated that in the packets there are options the City has going forward. Option #1 – The City Council would leave the Administrator/Clerk as one position and Option #2 – The City Council make create a new position for the City of Long Prairie titled Finance Director and maintain the City Administrator position with a new job description.

City Attorney Joe Krueger stated that he would need to specify when it would be effective. He states these two issues are tied together. As to what the City wants to do with the position and whether you want Ted to stay on part-time in a part-time role. Council member Gripne stated it would be difficult to make a decision. Krueger suggested that the Council take some time to review the proposals and then possibly schedule a special meeting solely about that issue. Gray would attend and go over what the options are and explanation and rational behind what he is proposing. Joe also stated that if the Council wanted, they could accept his resignation tonight, he would stay on until the City makes a final decision or hires a replacement for him in that part-time role. Gripne stated that she does not feel comfortable just terminating him. Wright stated that he did not feel right making a decision tonight. Kreemer asked if the Council should have a work session and decide which way the Council would like to go. Wright schedule a work session for Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. to discuss options for City Administrator.

Council member Kreemer motioned to accept the resignation of City Administrator/Clerk Ted Gray, with Gray staying on part-time to assist in the day-to-day activities at a reduced rate of \$35.00 and earn ESST per the part-time policy of .0333 for hours earned and he would remain on the city's health insurance until his replacement can be hired. Gripne seconded the motion. Kreemer amended his motion to add and that he will let the City staff now and Acting Mayor what his part-time schedule would be. Krueger seconded the amended motion. Wright amended the motion to accept Ted Gray's resignation as of Monday, February 5, 2024. Kreemer seconded the amended motion. Motion passed unanimously.

(Public Comment)

Marica Olivier Business Agent for Teamster who represents the Public Works. She stated that she wanted the Council to be aware that she has attempted to work with the previous Administrator since late summer early fall regarding an issue that is surrounding inequity, unfair or despaired treatment of things that are accruing within that group. The Union has suggested two possible resolutions. Expectations were made clear back on October 6, 2023 in writing and those expectations were to be met January 1, 2024 as a firm deadline. City Attorney Krueger stated that there is an agenda item that will be on the February 20th meeting to address this issue directly in a closed session if the subject so desires that it be handled.

Kevin Klimek commented on the abatement hearing that was supposed to be at tonight's meeting and now it is being tabled again. Wright explained that the Long Prairie Packing might withdraw from the abatement process and asked for a postponement.

Steve Hinson commented the City Council and American Food Group have lost political and social capital which they have had in the past, which makes it more difficult for them to do things that may or may not be as popular. He stated the Council does bear some of that responsibility of that political capital being lost. Not paying attention to the residents of the City for their concerns.

Matt Holt commented he was there also regarding the abatement hearing. He did speak at the Commissioners meeting about that. He also wanted the Council to be aware that yes this was brought up to the City administration for us to look at this as well. I had multiple meetings and there was no follow up. It seems to be a common occurrence here in the administrative office. With that being stated you may have just accepted a part-time position without actually talking out all of the details.

(Council Reports)

Council member Krueger stated daily water/wastewater rounds and samples are going fine. Public Works has been busy with maintenance at water treatment plant, sweeping streets and shop projects.

Acting Mayor Wright stated Police Department had 204 since last meeting averaging 9.7 per day. They have had a few trainings since last meeting. Officer Goethier completed the classroom portion of Drug Recognition Evaluator Training. He will head to Philadelphia later this month to do field training portion of this training. Officer Morazan and Officer Goethier both completed pit pursuit intervention technique training. Officer Morazan completed the standard field sobriety test training, and eleven officers completed their EMR training. Officer Morazan and Officer Harden will be in Alexandria this Thursday February 8, 2024 to represent Long Prairie Police Department at the job fair. Fire Department had 389.5 hours in January, which does not include the fire calls. They completed EMR training also. A Grant was submitted for FEMA to replace the SCBA and compressor system. EAM was in last week to do the safety on all of the fire trucks.

Council member Kreemer stated things are looking good at the Liquor Store. Planning and Zoning had a meeting Tuesday. There was a representative Jake from Sourcewell. He works with a bunch of other Cities on their Planning and Zoning. Sourcewell will help Cities out with Planning and Zoning. They will help out with forms, make it easier for citizens to apply for a building permit. He also suggested that Planning and Zoning meet once a month instead of as needed. If there is nothing on the agenda, you do not have to meet. He is also proposing to have the pay increase from \$5.00 per meeting up to \$25.00 per meeting. This is in line with EDA and what other cities are getting. Kreemer stated that he feels Jake will help out Planning and Zoning quite a bit.

Council member Gripne stated the Health and Wellness meeting is this Friday, where suicide prevention will be one of the topics. On February 24th at the Library, Jeff Lucas, a local author, is going to do a presentation at 10:00 a.m. on Long Prairie.

Acting Mayor Wright stated he will appoint someone to Community Concern for Youth, Elder and Tourism at the next meeting.

(Old Business)

Review Fire Department Compensation. In speaking with the Fire Chief before the meeting, he asked if the Council could pull that from the agenda. This will not be on the next agenda as of yet until we have a meeting with the Fire Department to go over the compensation proposal.

(New Business)

Lu from Tourism stated the last three to four years, the Chamber of Commerce has taken over the Tourism role, which was headed by Eric Streed, Don Rasmussen, and Amy Allen. Since then, the Chamber has taken over the Concert in the Park, Welcome Guide and anything that had to do with Tourism. With the additional hours that she has put in for the last three to four years and have not had an increase. The increase would be \$2,400 extra for a total of \$5,000.00 per year. Lu gave examples of the increase in the work that she has done. Lu stated that she has a lot on her plate and that her Board stated it was about time that there was a little bit more compensation for all the extra work she has taken on. Concert in the Park, Lu is calling every single music group and raising funds for that and approaching sponsors, which takes a lot of work. They are trying to raise \$10,000.00. Lu stated that her work has doubled if not tripled. Kreemer asked if the \$5,000.00 would be strictly for a wage increase. Lu stated not necessarily a wage increase, but added to the Chambers budget because she just had a 3% wage increase. EDA said there is 3% increase. Lu had spoken to Staples and Wadena to see what their EDA Director receives and every year they increase it by 3%.

Acting Mayor Wright moved to approve the Tourism contribution from the City to \$5,000.00 per year. Krueger seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Acting Mayor Wright moved to approve the \$2,587.36 per month for EDA. Wright moved to rescind my motion to approve the \$2,587.36 per month and move to approve the contract for Community Development Services between the Long Prairie Economic Development Authority and Long Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce. Gripne seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Todd County EDA has requested an increase in sponsorship from the city. The increase would be \$5,000.00 to a total of \$7,500.00.

Council member Kreemer motioned to approve the \$7,500.00 sponsorship to make the City of Long Prairie a Diamond Partner Sponsor for the Todd County Development Corporation. Gripne seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Acting Mayor Wright motioned to approve the salary increase correction to \$20.40 for Ian Sanchez. Kreemer seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Council member Kreemer motioned to approve the Transient Merchant License for Amos Yoder with the corrected dates of 04/01/2024 – 04/01/2025. Krueger seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Ryan Hanson discussed with the Council the request to create a Community Service Officer position. Working on requiring new officers in an unlicensed position while they are going to school to get the training, they would need to be an officer. They would be out in a marked squad car working on ordinance issues, responding to medicals to assist full-time officers with traffic control and any other areas that the police department would need. Possibility housing/rental property enforcement as well. Starting wage would be \$19.78 per hour.

Kreemer addressed his concern with the Police Department budget. Kreemer asked if this could be added to the work session discuss budget and see where this money would come from for this position.

Council member Kreemer motioned to move the Community Service Officer position to the work session with Chief Hanson to explain the position. Gripne seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Acting Mayor Wright motioned to approve the liquor license for the Long Prairie Lions for the Long Prairie Fire Department Polar Plunge on February 24, 2024 at Lake Charlotte Beach. Gripne seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Next meeting will be Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. for a work session to discuss City Administrator position and Community Service Officer position.

Next City Council meeting will be Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Council member Gripne motioned seconded by Kreemer to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Motion unanimously carried.

Deb Laumeyer
Deputy Clerk

David Wright
Acting Mayor