

**CLEARWATER CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
JANUARY 8, 2024**

**1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance: 7:00 p.m. at City Hall**

- Mayor Lawrence called the Clearwater City Council to order Monday, January 8, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Members present were Mayor Lawrence, Council Members Luhmann, Schwinghammer, Vazquez and Winkelman. Also present were members of the public, staff, and guests.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

- Mayor Lawrence requested two additions to the agenda under New Business after item 7(f): 1) discuss scheduling a goal-setting workshop and 2) discuss City Council and Board compensation.
- Administrator Smythe requested the following agenda changes: 1) add 3 claims totaling \$9,560.23 under Consent Agenda; 2) add discussion of plow truck purchase under Old Business as item 6(c); and 3) correct the Planning Commission appointments on Resolution 2024-01 under item 7(a) to reflect Mary Thomes in place of Patrick Herron, per the City Council approval from September 2023.
- **MOTION** by Luhmann to approve Agenda with the requested changes, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**3. Wright County Sheriff's Report**

- Deputy Johnson attended in place of Deputy Doiron but did not have a report. Members did not have any questions from the written calls report.

**4. Public Forum**

**a. Library Report – Shelly Kuelbs**

- Ms. Kuelbs gave an overview of the following items in the annual library annual report:
  - Added services since the Covid-19 shutdowns include curbside pickup, hotspots and wi-fi checkouts, print-to-go at library branches, and online card registration.
  - Local branches now offer repair manuals and practice tests for driving permits.
  - Concerns continue to include a lack of outdoor space and visibility of the local branch.
  - Partnered with CVBC to add new programs, including materials in the new resident packets, having a table at the Business Expo, assisting with Music In the Park, programming during the Harvest Festival, and hosting the zoo-mobile.
  - Working with Clearview Elementary to host author visits and promoting the summer reading program.
  - Raising funds for arts and cultural programs, including last year's program from the Raptor's Center. The local branch was the regional leader for fundraising last year.
  - Responded to Members' question about local branch hours.
  - Noted the increase in new members and library usage year over year.

**b. Other**

- Members of the public attended to give comments related to the proposed options to address Spring Street flooding under item 6(a).
  - Mr. Hill from 845 Spring Street stated that residents should not be assessed for any proposed improvements because these should have been done when the street project was completed in 2019.
  - Ms. Heaton from 850 Spring Street thanked Council Member Luhmann for touring her property and viewing the erosion on her property from stormwater runoff.

## 5. Consent Agenda

- a. Claims/Accounts Payable in the Amount of \$ 227,735.86 + \$9,560.23 = \$237,296.09
  - b. Approval of Minutes from 12-11-2023 Regular City Council Meeting
  - c. Res 2024-02 – Pre-Authorization of Claims Payments
  - d. Accept 2024 Step Scale Correction
  - e. Accepting LMC Insurance Dividend
  - f. Approval of Pay Equity Report
  - g. Res 2024-08 – Accepting Donation for Fire Department
  - h. Year End Summary Report
- **MOTION** by Winkelman to approve Consent Agenda as amended, seconded by Vazquez, all voted aye.  
**MOTION CARRIED.**

## 6. Old Business

### a. Res 2024-09 – Spring Street Stormwater Improvements

- Engineer Kannas reported that he had run estimates for the options discussed last summer and had also spoken with MnDot about the possibility of connecting a storm sewer to their system along the T.H. 24 right-of-way. MnDot will allow the proposed connection. He outlined the two proposals, which include adding storm sewer piping and catch basins. The costs are similar for the two options. He cautioned that this improvement will remove the stormwater runoff from the street area but will not address runoff within private properties that existed prior to the street project. Some residents could still see some standing water after heavy rain events due to low elevations of their properties.
- Member Luhmann asked if the city has a manhole in the cul-de-sac at the end of Spring Street. Kannas replied that one would have to be added, there are no existing facilities large enough for the proposed 12" pipe.
- Member Luhmann asked if there was an option to add an underground retention tank. Kannas stated that it was possible but would be expensive, as it would require a large footprint and easements from local property owners. He also noted that it would not help with the spring runoff issues because the tank could freeze up in the winter if frost goes deep enough. He believes the addition of storm sewer and catch basins is a better option for this area, as it is more effective and a lower cost.
- Kannas explained the proposed Resolution 2024-09, noting that this does not require the city to assess the costs of improvements, but keeps it open as an option if the city does decide later to assess any of the costs.
- Smythe pointed out that Members should consider how the improvement will be funded, as the stormwater fund is new and has very little reserves, and the other utility funds also can't support these costs. She asked Kannas what other options might be available. Kannas stated the city likely would need to use general levy funds. He stated that there is a possibility of checking with the state or county for funds if erosion prevention is part of the project.
- Resident Donna Heaton noted that there is a hay roll left from a prior project on the end of Spring Street and asked to have it removed, as it also blocks water flow and is not needed.
- **MOTION** by Lawrence to approve Resolution 2024-09, seconded by Winkelman.
- **DISCUSSION ON THE MOTION** - Member Luhmann stated she is against the engineer's proposals because she believes the city should look deeper and that these are not the best options. She also noted that the proposals only address part of the problem.
- **AMENDMENT TO MOTION** – Mayor Lawrence amended the **MOTION** to also direct the engineer to look into and separately outline options and costs for improvements behind the curb on private properties. **AMENDMENT ACCEPTED** by Winkelman.

- **VOTE ON AMENDED MOTION** - Voting aye – Lawrence, Winkelman, Vazquez, and Schwinghammer. Voting nay – Luhmann. **MOTION CARRIED 4-1.**
- Ms. Heaton invited all City Council Members to visit and tour her property.
- b. Consider Food Shelf Donation**
- Smythe reported the comments from the city attorney related to options for providing food shelf funding.
  - Per the city attorney, state law does allow donations by cities to food shelves if they meet legal requirements as a nonprofit corporation. He cautioned that donations exceeding \$150,000 could trigger business subsidy laws.
  - He also stated that the Council does have the ability to provide donations in the form of a rent reduction, but we may need to amend the lease agreement.
- **MOTION** by Schwinghammer to waive the food shelf’s rental fees for their location in the Lions Park building until they move out, seconded by Vazquez, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- Members discussed a cash donation and determined they would like more financial information from the organization before deciding on a donation amount. Staff directed to invite food shelf representatives to the next meeting to provide details about the project budget.
- c. Revisit Plow Truck Purchase**
- Smythe explained that following the previous approval to purchase, staff had spoken to other agencies and learned that the Towmaster package seemed to have less repair issues. They requested pricing of the Towmaster package but removed a wedge tank to lower the price. The new proposal has a monthly lease of \$6,895.09 and a purchase price of \$427,036.66. Staff are requesting authorization to purchase this upgraded model.
- Member Vazquez was concerned about the increased cost and asked for specifics on types of breakages being seen by these other agencies. Smythe did not have that information. She also explained the issues obtaining information because the manufacturer is here but the leasing company is out of state.
- Engineer Kannas stated that the Towmaster model is spoken of highly by other cities he works with, but he also was not clear on specifics of why those agencies preferred he Towmaster.
- Mayor Lawrence noted that if other area agencies are using this model, it may be easier to get replacement parts later. Member Schwinghammer agreed, noting the local manufacturer in Litchfield.
- **MOTION** by Schwinghammer to approve the purchase of the upgraded Towmaster model for \$6,895.09 per month lease, purchase price of \$427,036.66, seconded by Luhmann, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

## 7. New Business

### a. Res 2024-01 – Approving Annual Appointments

- Members discussed appointments. Smythe noted that Vern Scott’s term on the Planning Commission has expired, and he has requested to stay on for another term. No one else has applied. Members stated that they are happy to stay on the same boards as 2023.
- **MOTION** by Lawrence to approve Resolution 2024-01 keeping existing city council members in their current roles, replacing Patrick Herron’s name with Mary Thomes on the Planning Commission per the September approval, and re-appointing Vern Scott to the Planning Commission for another 3-year term, seconded by Luhmann, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

### b. Res 2024-04 – Approving Annexation Petition

- Mark Muller was present representing the property owners. He stated that their tenant Telcom plans to operate a safety training program at this location for their business.

- **MOTION** by Lawrence to approve Resolution 2024-04, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- c. Res 2024-05 – Authorizing TAP Grant Application**
  - Kannas explained that this is a federal grant program for the trail planned for T.H. 24 as part of the T.H. 24 Corridor project. The funds would be used for trail construction and possibly curb and gutter along the highway. The maximum amount is \$800,000 with a 20% local match. Both Resolution 2024-05 and 2024-06 are required for the application.
  - **MOTION** by Luhmann to approve Resolution 2024-05, seconded by Vazquez, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- d. Res 2024-06 – Committing to Trail Maintenance**
  - **MOTION** by Lawrence to approve Resolution 2024-06, seconded by Luhmann.
  - **DISCUSSION ON THE MOTION** – Member Luhmann stated she would like Members to consider adding seasonal staff to assist with winter trail maintenance once it is built, and suggested adding it to the 2027 budget.
  - **VOTE** – all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- e. Res 2024-07 – Approving IJJA Grant Agreement**
  - Kannas explained that this agreement is for a grant of \$30,000 already received and is used to fund the costs of applying for the RAISE grant with requested funding of \$5 million for the T.H. 24 Corridor project.
  - **MOTION** by Luhmann to approve Resolution 2024-07, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- f. Authorizing Purchase of Skid Loader**
  - Smythe explained the quotes for the proposed skid loader purchase. Both are under the budget set in the Capital Improvement Plan. Both prices are the same, as they are state bid, however one vendor is giving us more for our trade-in.
  - **MOTION** by Luhmann approving purchase per the quote from Arnold’s, seconded by Winkelman, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- g. Consider Scheduling Goal-Setting Workshop**
  - Mayor Lawrence suggested scheduling a goal setting workshop to discuss facility needs and plans for the property purchased and in the purchase in progress. After discussion, Members decided on February 20, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. for a special workshop.
- h. Consider Changes to City Council and Board Compensation**
  - Mayor Lawrence suggested reviewing the compensation for city council and boards, as it has not been changed for many years. Members agreed. Staff were directed to bring to the next meeting information on city council and board pay from the cities of Monticello, Maple Lake, and Howard Lake.
- i. Closed Session – City Administrator Performance Review**
  - The meeting was closed by Mayor Lawrence at 8:27 p.m. to conduct the annual performance review of City Administrator Smythe. The meeting re-opened at 9:36 p.m.
  - Mayor Lawrence stated for the record that the City Administrator is meeting or exceeding expectations.
- j. Res 2024-03 – Consider Approval of Step Increase**
  - **MOTION** by Winkelman to approve Resolution 2024-03, seconded by Luhmann, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

## 8. Committee Reports

### a. Mayor and Council

- Mayor Lawrence stated that the Wright County Mayors’ Association (WCMA) met December 20, 2023 and was a good meeting. A legislative update was provided and there were additional updates on cannabis from the county attorney and sheriff. Smythe noted that Clearwater will be hosting WCMA in September. It is the first time Clearwater has hosted for many years.
- Member Schwinghammer noted that the city’s trash hauler Republic Services can be called directly for issues. Mayor Lawrence believes this information is also on the city’s website or used to be. Smythe will check.

**b. Boards**

- Sewer Authority – Met December 14, 2023 and discussed equipment purchases. They are also having a special meeting on Thursday to review the pay equity report.
- EDA – Held their business social on December 19, 2023 at 8:00 a.m. at the Lions Park Pavilion. It was well attended by local business members and State Senator Bruce Anderson.
- Fire Relief Association Board – Met December 18, 2023 and discussed their audit report. They are also asking the state to attend a future meeting to present their investment options. The 2024 calendars are out. The Santa on the fire truck was well-received.
- Planning Commission – Did not meet.
- Park Commission – Did not meet. Splash pad committee scheduling is in progress.

**c. Staff**

- Smythe asked if Lawrence and Luhmann had provided required information to US Bank to change bank signers. Lawrence has mailed hers in. Luhmann will coordinate with Smythe on hers.
- Smythe reminded members that the Heritage Festival committee is meeting January 16.
- Smythe explained the issues staff are having trying to get the ice going with the warm weather. Both the Lions Park rink and Spring Street rink have had damage to the ice by kids or vandals, and the liner at Spring Street has a hole and is leaking. Staff wanted the Council to decide if the rink at El Dorado Park should be installed this late in the season or left for next year, given the high cost of the liner. Members’ consensus was to not have a rink at El Dorado this year and refer the public to use Lions Park and Spring Street rinks.
- Smythe asked if January 219 would work for a Fire Commission meeting. Schwinghammer is not available. Vazquez offered to attend in his place for that date.
- Kwik Trip has asked for a letter of support for a grant application to install an EV charging station. Members asked if staff had time to write a letter. Smythe explained that a template was provided. Members’ consensus was to proceed with the letter of support.
- Smythe noted that we have received several applications for the open accounting position and hope to have a candidate for approval at the February meeting.

**9. Other Business**

**a. Next Regular Meeting – February 12, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.**

- Next regular meeting date was confirmed.
- Special workshop meeting scheduled for February 20, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

**10. Adjournment**

- **MOTION** to adjourn by Lawrence, seconded by Luhmann, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- Meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

ATTEST

  
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 Annita M. Smythe, City Administrator

APPROVED

  
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 Andrea Lawrence Wheeler, Mayor