

CLEARWATER CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 10, 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, June 10, 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, and Vazquez. Member Winkelman was absent. Also present were members of the public, staff, and guests.

2. Approval of Agenda

- The City Administrator requested the following Agenda changes:
 - Consent Agenda – add: Claim for CLCWSA in the amount of \$57,829.66;
 - Consent Agenda – add: Approval of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for purchase of vehicle speed signs for County Road 75 from Wright County;
 - New Business – remove: Closed Session;
 - New Business – add: Accept Resignation of Accounting Clerk;
 - New Business – add: Resolution 2024-42 – Approving Hire of Accounting Clerk;
 - New Business – add: Authorize Posting of Utility Billing Clerk.
- **MOTION** by Luhmann to approve Agenda with the requested additions, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

3. Wright County Sheriff's Report

- Deputy Willard attended in place of Marschal. He did not have a report but advised residents to keep their cars locked when unattended.

4. Public Forum

a. T.H. 24 Corridor Project Concerns – James Thiesen

- Mr. Theisen stated he is a 20-year business owner in Clearwater (Flinstones) and has the following concerns about the T.H. 24 project after attending the MnDot public meetings:
 - He doesn't support roundabouts.
 - He doesn't support eliminating left turns on T.H. 24.
 - He stated people won't cross a 3-foot cement barricade to cross the road.
 - He stated the plan will destroy businesses.
 - He stated the communication about the project has been bad.
 - He doesn't like the proposed pedestrian crossings at the I94 ramps.
 - He wants the City Council to reconsider the project as a whole.
- Tom Plaggerman from Parts City Auto expressed his opposition to the two MnDot proposals.
 - He believes there are better ways to improve the corridor.
 - He also opposes the removal of left turns from T.H. 24.
 - He stated that the project designer Alliant's own traffic statistics estimate that the traffic numbers will decline if they do the project but don't if the project is not done.
 - He is concerned that business growth will be stunted by the project.
 - He stated that there are other plans to address safety without hurting businesses and cited a pamphlet from the FHA that can be found online.
 - He asked for another plan to be considered that includes left turns.

- Amanda Finnenan who works locally at Telcom stated:
 - The lights are beneficial because there are lots of accidents at County Road 75 and T.H. 24 and the lights allow people to cross.
 - She stated that none of the proposals alleviate concerns coming out of Kwik Trip.
 - She asked about tractors crossing the bridge and how they would navigate.
 - She asked how the project will help with residential growth.

5. Consent Agenda

- a. **Claims/Accounts Payable in the Amount of \$ 590,305.65 + \$57,829.66**
 - b. **Approval of Minutes from 05-13-2024 Regular City Council Meeting**
 - c. **Res 2024-38 – Approving Special Event Permit – Heritage Festival**
 - d. **Res 2024-39 – Declining Waiver of Statutory Tort Limits**
 - e. **Res 2024-40 – Accepting Donation for Fire Department**
 - f. **Res 2024-41 – Approving New Hire for Fire Department**
 - g. **Approval of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for purchase of vehicle speed signs for County Road 75 from Wright County**
- **MOTION** by Luhmann to approve Consent Agenda as amended, seconded by Vazquez, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

6. Old Business

- a. **Consider T.H. 24 Corridor Project Alternatives**
 - Mayor Lawrence provided background on the proposed project’s history. She also shared feedback from recent meeting with MnDot about the alternatives. Tonight’s meeting is not for the formal municipal consent to the project. MnDot is simply asking the City Council to share their preferences between the two alternatives offered, alternative #3 or alternative #4. She noted that the Council shares some of the concerns raised by residents and businesses and asked people to continue to share their feedback with MnDot. She also noted that the public comment section of the meeting has been closed.
 - Lawrence asked Members for their thoughts on the two alternatives.
 - Member Schwinghammer stated that as a truck driver, he prefers alternative #4. He also stated his concerns about drivers illegally interfering with truck movements in roundabouts by passing on the interior or exterior lanes.
 - Member Vazquez asked about the timing of the bridge plans. Smythe stated the plan is for bridge construction to begin in 2026.
 - Member Luhmann stated she doesn’t like either option, but of the two, alternative #4 seems better for business access.
 - Mayor Lawrence stated she is leaning towards alternative #4 because of the closer roundabout for access to the Travel Plaza side of highway.
 - Member Luhmann asked if people will be able to walk across the highway. Smythe noted that the information from MnDot was that the median by the bridge will be taller for safety but that any median through the main part of town would be a standard curb that pedestrians could cross, although they discourage that for safety reasons.
 - Member Vazquez stated that he doesn’t have a preference but is leaning towards alternative #4 because alternative #3 includes a traffic design that has not been previously used in Minnesota. (Divergabout). He doesn’t want Clearwater to be the training ground for people to learn how to navigate a new design.
 - **MOTION** by Lawrence to express a preference for alternative #4, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

b. Spring Street Stormwater Project

- Engineer Kannas gave an overview of the prior road projects and how they were assessed. Members had questions on how the past projects were completed and why the stormwater improvements were not done with the Southeast Street Project. There was discussion about the pushback from some residents and that costs were an issue at the time.
- Members asked if Kannas could provide an estimate of what share of the total project costs the Spring Street residents would be responsible for if the improvements had been done as part of the street project and assessed to the neighborhood as a whole. He estimates the costs would be about a quarter of the projected assessment now.
- Kannas outlined the next step, which included finalizing the feasibility study and making a decision on whether to assess any part of the project and at what level. The city is not required to assess if not using bonded funds to pay for the project.
- Member Vazquez asked if there is an assessment rate that gets closer to what it would have been if included in the original project. Kannas can include that in his estimates.
- **MOTION** by Vazquez directing engineer to complete the feasibility study and reduce the assessment rate to what it would have been if stormwater costs were included in the original 2019 Southeast Street Project, seconded by Lawrence, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

c. Reconsider No-mow May Initiative

- Mayor Lawrence gave an overview of the initiative from last year whose goal is to help pollinators. After discussion, Members directed staff to bring back a draft ordinance amendment for next meeting.
- Members would also like staff to weed-whip the center islands on Kelsey Ave while we await a quote for re-planting and trim any dead branches.

7. New Business

a. Accept Resignation of Accounting Clerk

- **MOTION** by Lawrence accepting resignation of Accounting Clerk Cheri Singleton, seconded by Luhmann, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

b. Resolution 2024-42 – Approving Hire of Accounting Clerk

- **MOTION** by Luhmann to approve Resolution 2024-42, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

c. Authorize Posting of Utility Billing Clerk

- **MOTION** by Lawrence to authorize posting of part-time position for 20 hours per week, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

8. Committee Reports

a. Mayor and Council

- Mayor Lawrence reported that the Wright County Mayors' Association (WCMA) will meet next Wednesday in Hanover.
- Member Luhmann asked if her son can volunteer to mow at Veterans Park. Smythe stated he could and that he should check in with John from Public Works.

b. Boards

- EDA – Meets next Tuesday. Members noted the departure of Jolene Foss from WCEDP and discussed the upcoming farmer's market being run by CVBC.
- Fire Relief Association Board – Meets next Monday.
- Planning Commission – Did not meet.
- Sewer Authority – Meets next Thursday.
- Park Commission – Discussed the following:

- Nothing new on the splash pad project yet.
- For basketball courts in Spring Street Park, Commissioners recommended a full-court option with no parking at an estimated cost of around \$22,000.
 - **MOTION** by Luhmann to accept the quote from Diversified for the basketball court, seconded by Vazquez, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**
- There was some discussion of pavilion options at El Dorado Park.
- Discussion of the proposed trail from Riverside to the new land requires input from DNR, as the bank is very steep and will need to be cut into for sufficient trail space. Members asked about signage for new land. Smythe will check with staff.
- Noted that the Phase II landscaping of Veterans Park was discussed. Committee meetings are being planned.
- Riverside Park is also in the planning phase for erosion control and other improvements.

c. Staff

– Smythe reported on the following:

- She has asked MnDot about the requested jake braking sign but has not yet received a response.
- The city has successfully closed on the purchase of the Huber Ave property.
- The Business View magazine article about Clearwater is now live.
- The city’s recent loss control visit went well, and the city had another year with no injuries.
- Suggested requesting a tour of the Cokato fire hall and asked if anyone would like to attend. Lawrence and Schwinghammer would like to attend.
- Provided an update that the driveway issue on 9th Street related to the Central Minnesota Cold Storage project has been resolved.

9. Other Business

a. Consider Next Regular Meeting Date

– Smythe asked if the next meeting should be moved due to the July 4th holiday. Members preferred to stay with the regular meeting date. Meeting confirmed for July 8, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

10. Adjournment

- **MOTION** to adjourn by Lawrence, seconded by Luhmann, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**
- Meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

ATTEST

Annita M. Smythe, City Administrator

APPROVED

Andrea Lawrence Wheeler, Mayor