

**DECEMBER 4, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Lake Benton City Council was held on Monday, December 4, 2023 at 5:30 P.M. in the Lake Benton Area Community and Event Center. Mayor Michael Carpenter presided. Trustees Rosie DeZeeuw, Karen Lichtsinn, Patrick Haynes, and Scott Christensen were present. City Attorney Michael Cable was absent. City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen was also present.

Mayor Michael Carpenter called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

Mayor Michael Carpenter then asked if anyone in attendance had an item, not on the agenda, to bring up during the Open Forum part of the meeting. If so they had two minutes to state their concern. No items were brought forward at this time.

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 20, 2023 were reviewed. **MOTION** by Rosie DeZeeuw, seconded by Scott Christensen to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 20, 2023. Motion carried.

**CLAIMS PRESENTED AGAINST THE CITY OF LAKE BENTON:**

OTTER TAIL	\$ 2,059.79	ITC	\$ 297.62
LMC – BERKLEY	\$ 1,000.00	RETHWISCH & SON	\$ 27.75
MN RURAL WATER	\$ 400.00	TRAVIS LUSTFIELD	\$ 32.00
PAT HAYNES	\$ 250.00	HGTV MAGAZINE	\$ 19.97
MN DEPT OF HEALTH	\$ 789.00	MIKE OTTO	\$ 1,643.00
BIOAG ENERGY	\$ 841.77	TROY NORDMEYER	\$ 32.00
KYLIE ROCHEL	\$ 170.00	ONE OFFICE SOLUTION	\$ 32.07
BUFFALO RIDGE NEWS	\$ 58.00	THOMAS PLUMBING	\$ 120.00
AMAZON	\$ 89.10	CENTER POINT	\$ 49.14
DANNY/MEGAN KROTZER	\$ 250.00		

**MOTION** by Karen Lichtsinn, seconded by Patrick Haynes to approve payment of the claims presented against the City of Lake Benton. Motion carried and the Mayor authorized the City Administrator/Clerk to make payment.

The next item of business was to review/act on creating CDs for the City’s General, Fire and Water funds. Mayor Michael Carpenter stated when the City Council worked on the 2024 budget they approved creating several CDs in various funds if the money was not used in 2023. The General Fund CDs include \$1,000.00 for City Office Improvements, \$2,500.00 for Parks/Ballfields Lakeside Park Improvements, \$7,500.00 for Street Capital Outlay, and \$10,000.00 for Street Repair/Sealcoating. **MOTION** by Scott Christensen, seconded by Rosie DeZeeuw to approve the General Fund CDs for \$1,000.00 for City Office Improvements, \$2,500.00 for Parks/Ballfields Lakeside Park Improvements, \$7,500.00 for Street Capital Outlay, and \$10,000.00 for Street Repair/Sealcoating. Motion carried.

The Fire Fund had a budget of \$6,000.00 for the Capital Outlay/Building Fund which was used to remodel and update the Fire Hall and Sheriff’s Office. The City Council previously approved cashing in the two (2) \$5,000.00 CDs to pay the \$8,500.00 to remodel and update the Fire Hall. After the CDs have been cashed in this will leave \$1,500.00 in the account plus the \$6,000.00 that was in the budget to create a CD for \$7,500.00. **MOTION** by Karen Lichtsinn, seconded by Patrick Haynes to approve the \$7,500.00 CD for the Fire Capital Outlay/Building Fund. Motion carried.

The Water Fund CDs include \$5,000.00 for Capital Outlay/Water Improvements, and \$5,000.00 for Water Tank Upkeep. **MOTION** by Rosie DeZeeuw, seconded by Scott Christensen to approve the Water Fund CDs for \$5,000.00 for Capital Outlay/Water Improvements, and \$5,000.00 for Water Tank Upkeep. Motion carried.

The Public Works Account has \$2,000.00 remaining in Heavy Equipment/Repair, and \$10,000.00 for the purchase of new Capital Outlay Equipment. **MOTION** by Karen Lichtsinn, seconded by Patrick Haynes to approve the transfer of \$12,000.00 to the Public Works Account. Motion carried.

The interest rates for a 6-month and 12-month CD are 3.75%, and a special interest rate on a 9-month CD is 4.75%. **MOTION** by Patrick Haynes, seconded by Scott Christensen to authorize the Administrator/Clerk to create 9-month CDs in the General Fund, Fire Fund and Water Fund at an interest rate of 4.75%. Motion carried.

The next item of business was to review/act on the delinquent utility bills at 514 W. Benton Street owing \$741.32, 113 S. Cottage Street owing \$496.21, 303 Valley Street owing \$767.60, 605 Highway 75 owing \$619.73, 112 E. Bluff Street owing \$741.32, and 325 E. Benton Street owing \$841.71; and lawn mowing at 112 E. Bluff Street owing \$180.00, and 303 Valley Street owing \$195.00. The individuals will be mailed a letter on December 7, 2023 informing them if payment is not received by December 15, 2023, this amount will be certified as a property tax levy against their property on December 18, 2023. It was suggested we not send a letter to the owner of 325 E. Benton Street because the house is sale pending. The delinquent bill for 303 Valley Street is ongoing and the owner has been deceased for several years. It was recommended the Administrator/Clerk write a letter to County Attorney Glen Petersen requesting the status of the estate. **MOTION** by Karen Lichtsinn, seconded by Patrick Haynes to authorize the Administrator/Clerk to write a letter to County Attorney Glen Petersen requesting the status of the estate. Motion carried. **MOTION** by Patrick Haynes, seconded by Scott Christensen to submit the remaining delinquent water bills and lawn mowing bill to the County Auditor to be assessed to the properties if payment is not received by December 15, 2023. Motion carried.

The next item of business was to review/act on purchasing a new furnace for the Event Center. The furnace that heats the back room (banquet hall) at the Event Center went out before the Thanksgiving holiday and is believed to be the original furnace when the building was built. Mike Thomas with Thomas Plumbing fixed it and advised City staff a new furnace will need to be purchased for the back room. Mike also informed City staff a new furnace could cost up to \$3,500.00 and will be sending the City a quote for Council approval. The Council budgeted \$3,500.00 for the Event Center Capital Outlay account for 2024 which should cover the cost of a new furnace. Although there are not any funds remaining in the Event Center Capital Outlay in 2023 a new furnace will need to be purchased whenever it goes out again. **MOTION** by Patrick Haynes, seconded by Rosie DeZeeuw to move forward to purchase a new furnace for up to \$3,500.00 after a quote has been received from Thomas Plumbing. Motion carried.

The next item of business was to review/act on a building permit for Jose Alfredo Vasquez Miranda to add a 12' x 21' porch and an 8' x 24' wall to the back of their home at 212 S. Fremont Street. The \$25.00 application fee has been paid and is in compliance with the Ordinance setbacks. **MOTION** by Karen Lichtsinn, seconded by Scott Christensen to approve the building permit for Jose Alfredo Vasquez Miranda to add a 12' x 21' porch and an 8' x 24' wall to the back of their home at 212 S. Fremont Street. Motion carried.

The next item of business was to review/act on a Resolution Accepting Donations to the Library. The Library received a donation from Don and Diane Evers for \$20.00 in memory of Joyce Nielsen. This donation will be designated for collections. Minnesota Statutes state the Library can accept donations for the benefit of recreational services. The Council needs to pass the resolution accepting the donation to the Library. **MOTION** by Rosie DeZeeuw, seconded by Scott Christensen to approve the Resolution Accepting the Donation from Don and Diane Evers for \$20.00 in memory of Joyce Nielsen to the Library. Motion carried.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Trustee Rosie DeZeeuw – The Library Board met and patrons in the library is up from the previous year as well as circulation numbers. The Christmas Open House is scheduled for December 16, 2023 from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The library received an Art Series Grant and asked Michelle Weber to give a Painting in Oils class. This is a 5-week class beginning May 22, 2024 thru June 19, 2024 on Wednesday evenings.

A livestream event, Dear Jacob by Patty Wetterling, will be shown on Tuesday, December 5, 2023 at 6:30 PM at the library and is open to the public. Mayor Michael Carpenter informed the Council and audience he read the book and is planning to attend the livestream event. The Plum Creek Library system has 13 copies of this book and there is a waiting list.

Trustee Karen Lichtsinn – No report.

Trustee Scott Christensen – No report.

Trustee Patrick Haynes – No report.

**MOTION** by Patrick Haynes, seconded by Scott Christensen to approve the Committee Reports. Motion carried.

**ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK REPORT:**

No report.

At 6:00 PM Mayor Michael Carpenter called for a motion to go into the Truth-in-Taxation Hearing. **MOTION** by Scott Christensen, seconded by Karen Lichtsinn to go into the Truth-in-Taxation Hearing. Motion carried.

Mayor Michael Carpenter informed the Council and audience the Lake Benton City Council requested a 0% increase in 2023, and now the City is looking at a 3% increase for 2024. The proposed property taxes from the County show the County, City and School District's taxes went up. This is due to the houses being sold for higher than their estimated market value which drives the value of everyone's houses and taxes. The City raised the levy 3% due to property, liability and work comp insurance going up. The public can review the budget at the City office.

The proposed 2024 levy that was approved at the September 18, 2023 meeting was \$265,981.00 (\$188,981.00 allocated to the General Fund and \$77,000.00 allocated to the USDA-RUS Improvement Fund). The proposed amount levied for 2024 taxes payable was increased for 2024. Mayor Michael Carpenter then reminded the Council that the levy can be decreased but cannot be increased at this time.

The 2024 Budget amounts are as follows: General Fund: Income-\$537,498.00, Expense-\$537,294.00; Fire Fund: Income-\$90,300.00, Expense-\$97,580.00; Library Fund: Income-\$53,429.00, Expense-\$53,536; Utility Fund: Income-\$340,545.00, Expense-\$353,903; USDA-RUS Improvement Fund: Income-\$77,000.00, Expense-\$77,000.00.

Mayor Michael Carpenter stated this meeting is open to the general public and the City is proposing a 3% increase. Due to the fact there was no one in the audience this evening to come forward with questions, the Mayor reminded the general public they can review the budget at the City office.

**ROLL CALL MOTION** – Trustee Rosie DeZeeuw – Yeah, Trustee Karen Lichtsinn – Yeah, Trustee Patrick Haynes – Yeah, and Trustee Scott Christensen – Yeah to certify the tax levy for the City of Lake Benton at \$265,981.00 in which \$188,981.00 is allocated to the General Fund. Motion carried.

**ROLL CALL MOTION** – Trustee Rosie DeZeeuw – Yeah, Trustee Karen Lichtsinn – Yeah, Trustee Patrick Haynes – Yeah, and Trustee Scott Christensen – Yeah to allocate \$77,000.00 to the USDA-RUS Improvement Fund. Motion carried.

**MOTION** by Patrick Haynes, seconded by Rosie DeZeeuw to return to the regular meeting at 6:09 PM. Motion carried.

**MAYORAL REPORT:**

Mayor Michael Carpenter requested Maintenance Supervisor Travis Lustfield update the Council on a towing company to remove vehicles during snow removal at the December 18, 2023 meeting.

Mayor Michael Carpenter then informed the Council he receives the Minnesota Cities magazine and it features three (3), free, on-line courses the Council may want to review. The first course has a 15 minute duration on How to Close a Meeting, the second course has a 10 minute duration on Acknowledging Bias, and the third course has a 25 minute duration on City Government and the First Amendment. Mayor Michael Carpenter will leave the magazine with the Administrator/Clerk if any of the Council members would like to get a copy of these courses.

The next regular Council meeting is scheduled for December 18, 2023 at 5:30 PM.

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, a **MOTION** was made by Karen Lichtsinn, seconded by Scott Christensen and carried, the meeting adjourned.

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MAYOR

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ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK