

Minutes
Avon City Council
April 03, 2023

THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS WERE PRESENT

Jeff Manthe – Mayor, Katie Reiling, Aaron Goebel, Doug Schaefer, Mark Schulzetenberge - City Councilors
Corey Nellis – Chief, Chuck Pelkey – Public Works Foreman, Justin Kurtz – Water Wastewater Foreman
Jodi Austing-Traut, City Clerk-Administrator

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and the meeting was opened at 6:00 pm.

LOCAL BOARD OF APPEALS AND EQUALIZATION – Deb Haus/Kathy Korte

Motion Reiling to open the Board of Appeals and Equalization hearing at 6:01 pm second Schaefer and carried.

Debbie Haus and Kathy Korte were present to update the council on recent sales data and property assessments. Sales are down about 15% but the prices for home sales have not dropped and it is still an upward trend market. There were three sales on water. Off water residential properties saw a median increase of 7.3%. On water residential properties saw a median increase of 2.8%. Commercial/Industrial properties saw an increase of 2-4%. Apartment / Storage Units saw increases of 7-13%. New construction total in Avon was valued at \$3,370,800. Haus explained that with these increases in assessed values, owners of homesteaded property may apply for a property tax rebate through Stearns County if property tax amount has increased by at least 12% and \$100. Haus further stated that the city and county tax rates have decreased, but the school district taxes have increased.

Bruce Meredith 42.26230.0000 questioned the property tax amount on his 2023 statement. Haus explained how the valuation is set and that the tax rates are set in the fall. Korte explained that if Meredith wishes to do further research to support a lower value for his property, he could then take his issue up with the county board.

Motion Reiling to make no change to the property values at 42.26230.0000 second Schulzetenberge and carried unanimously.

Motion Goebel to close the Board of Appeals and Equalization hearing at 6:37 pm second Schaefer and carried unanimously.

PUBLIC FORUM

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Council Minutes of March 6th, 2023
2. Receive Planning Commission Minutes of March 21st, 2023
3. Receive Fire Board Minutes of March 7th, 2023
4. Receive Fire Department Minutes of February 27th, 2023
5. Paid Check Register, Manual Claims, Capital Expenditures, Payroll Deposits
6. Legal Fees, Engineering Fees, Auditor/Acct. Fees
7. Resolution 2023-09 Authorizing Document Signers for a Real Estate Transaction (Lot 7 Blk 1 Serenity)
8. Resolution 2023-10 Authorizing Document Signers for a Real Estate Transaction (Lots 1, 2 & 3 of Blk 1 Serenity)
9. Outdoor Event Permit June 16 – 17 (Spunk Days)
10. Outdoor Event Permit May 21 (Albany High School Jazz Band)
11. LMC Liability Coverage – approval *not* to waive the tort limits
12. Albany MN Band Boosters Raffle Permit
13. Avon Fire Relief Association Raffle Permit
14. FYI – Re: Hiring Discrimination Charge Dismissed
15. Clifton Larson Allen Invoice for \$24,190.62

Motion Goebel to approve consent agenda with the addition of the Clifton Larson Allen Invoice for \$24,190.62 second Schulzetenberge and carried unanimously.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

Streets/Stormwater Update – Jeremy Mathiasen, Stantec – City Engineer

Mathiasen gave a presentation on a Feasibility Study for the proposed 1st Street SE Project and pointed out the proposed project location, proposed improvements, and estimated project costs. Total project cost for 1st St SE portion only is estimated at \$1,879,000 whereas the total estimated project cost for the larger project including side streets is \$3,521,300. The entire presentation is on file at city hall. Next steps would include holding public meetings to present the project as well as finalize the design elements and scope of the project.

Jerry Smith at 201 Suncrest Court had stopped in to express that flooding and drainage issues are still somewhat problematic at his residence. Public works moved some snow and ice and dug a bit of a valley to create a path for the water which helped in one area, but created a problem in an adjacent area. At this point, the previously flooded area appears to be dry. Public works will continue to monitor the situation.

ISSUES BY STAFF

Administration

Refuse Contract Ends April 30, 2023 council consensus to allow the contract to automatically renew for one year.

Fiscal Policy Amendment Staff presented an amendment to change the asset capitalization threshold from \$2,500 to \$5,000 and to update the compensated absences section to comply with existing personnel policy.

Motion Schaefer to amend the fiscal policy to increase the capital asset depreciation threshold from \$2,500 to \$5,000 second Schulzetenberge

Motion Reiling to amend the fiscal policy to limit vacation accrual to five weeks as stated in the personnel policy second Schulzetenberge.

Other Updates

Avon Estates purchase agreements on 106 and 116 Serenity which were submitted by Arvola Builders have been forced to be rescinded. Tim and Donna Backes have resurfaced and claim that since they are listed in the Serenity at Avon Declaration and associated documents as the “exclusive builder” they have sole right to determine who builds in that area, in spite of past city councils asking them to open this area up to other builders. Backes have not been active in the building market in Avon in many years. Council will consider pursuing this issue further if the lots are not built upon within a reasonable period of time.

Half Cent Sales Tax update was received today. House Tax Committee Chair Aisha Gomez is not allowing any local tax bills to be heard by the house. There is a chance that during omnibus bill negotiations, these could be brought back into discussions. It is likely that if our bill to remove the \$1.5M cap from our existing local sales tax were to move through legislature, we would have to place the issue back on the ballot for residents to vote on.

Sauna at the Beach Austing-Traut advised that Laura and Luke Hartog have indicated that April 20th at 6:00 pm will be the date for their first “sauna at the beach” event.

Spring Fling will be held on May 6th from 9-1 at Wobegon Park to coincide with city wide garage sales.

Stearns County Sherriff’s Department will be holding their day camp at Lion’s Park on June 15th. There may be a helicopter, ambulance, and fire trucks stationed there for the participants to experience.

Reminder that council will have a workshop on Tuesday, April 11th at 6:30 pm to discuss Avon Estates.

Public Works

Chuck Pelkey presented his written report and updated the council on several issues that public works is dealing with including a damaged flag pole in Wobegon Trailhead Park, snow/ice issues, and potholes. Patch will not hold at these

temperatures. As soon as temperatures will allow for the patch to hold, public works will begin patching. Crack filling and sealcoating will also be done this spring.

Justin Kurtz presented his written report and updated the council on the tower being cleaned and inspected today. Results will be back shortly and shared with council. Kurtz presented quotes for alarm dialers to be installed at the five lift stations that do not currently have them. Total cost of approximately \$4,820 for all five.

Motion Schaefer to authorize the purchase of five alarm dialers per the quote from Preferred Controls for up to \$5,000 total with installation by an electrician with staff assistance second Schulzetenberge carried unanimously.

Kurtz further updated council that there have been issues with the electronics (Programmable Logic Controllers / PLCs) which act as the “brains” of the wastewater treatment plant. Kurtz will continue to troubleshoot and work with preferred controls to determine next steps.

Police Department

Written report was presented by Chief Nellis. Chief has made a job offer to Eric Schultz to act in the capacity of part-time police officer and is working with another candidate to fill the second part-time position. Nellis requested the council approve the hiring of Eric Schultz as a part-time police officer at a starting rate of \$24/hour and to adopt a resolution declaring that the position to be held by Schultz qualifies for Police PERA program participation.

Motion Goebel to approve the hiring of Eric Schultz as part-time police officer and adopting Resolution 2023-11 Designating Eric Schultz as a member of the PERA Police and Fire Plan, second Schaefer and carried unanimously.

Chief Nellis requested an amendment to the squad car use policy as recommended by the League of MN cities.

Motion Goebel to approve an amendment to Section 300 the Law Enforcement Patrol Car Policy second Schulzetenberge and carried unanimously.

Fire Department

Chuck Swenson was present to update the council on the status of the Fire Hall Expansion project. The committee is beginning to get preliminary ideas down on paper. Contract is nearly ready for signature.

ISSUES BY COUNCIL

Councilman Schaefer asked Chief Nellis for clarification on a police matter.

Councilman Schaefer brought forth an issue of a bare lot on main street being up for sale and asked on behalf of the property owner, whether the city would be interested purchasing it. Council did not express interest in purchasing at this time.

Adjourn

Adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jodi Austing-Traut
City Clerk/Administrator