

City of Winsted
City Council Work Session
Vollmer Room
Tuesday, March 7, 2023
5:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Steve Stotko
Council Member Jeff Albers
Council Member Jesse Cafferty
Council Member Steve Ebert
Council Member Tom Ollig

Staff Present: Mr. Adam Birkholz, Interim City Administrator
Ms. Raquel Kirchoff, City Clerk-Treasurer
Mr. Justin Heldt, Police Chief
Mr. Chris Bahr, Maintenance Supervisor

I. Call to Order

Mayor Stotko called the Work Session to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. Police Department – Part-Time Wage Scale

Mr. Adam Birkholz, Interim City Administrator, stated that the current wage for part-time police officers pay is \$24.00 per hour. The City Council has discussed adjusting the compensation for part-time police officers to attract applicants in recognition of the specialized position. City staff recommends keeping the wage at \$24.00 per hour for officers during training. Once training is complete, City staff recommends creating a three (3) step wage scale for part-time officer that includes; \$24.00 per hour as step one (1), step two (2) at a wage in the middle of the full-time police officer wage scale, and step three (3) at the top of the full-time police officer wage scale. The City Administrator would recommend what step to pay from based on a part-time officer's experience.

Mr. Justin Heldt, Police Chief, stated that it would be beneficial to allow the City Administrator to evaluate and recommend the wage for full-time officers when they are hired; and also for part-time police officers, once their training is complete. He continued by stating that the City needs to pay more of an hourly wage to obtain working shifts from the part-time officers, since the current part-time police officers are employed full-time by other agencies.

The City Council Members had no objections to the recommendations. Mr. Birkholz stated that a future City Council Meeting Agenda would include considering approval of a new wage scale for part-time police officers.

Mr. Birkholz stated that recently, three (3) strong candidates were interviewed for both full-time and part-time police officer. He continued by stating that the March 7, 2023 Consent Agenda includes approval of a conditional offer of employment to one (1) of the candidates. In addition, City staff recommends extending another conditional offer for full-time police officer to a different candidate at the March 7th meeting under New Business. This would produce a five (5) full-time police officer department. Mr. Birkholz explained some reasons to hire another full-time officer at this time to include; not losing a strong candidate in current market conditions, and due to only two (2) officers currently able to patrol until approximately November, 2023.

Mr. Birkholz stated that both candidates recommended for full-time positions have experience and will likely not work for the City at Step One (1) of the full-time police officer wage scale. He continued by stating that hiring the candidates at a higher step may have an impact on current officers; however, the current market for police officers dictates the difference.

Mr. Birkholz stated that the March 7, 2023 New Business Agenda also includes consideration of a conditional offer for one (1) part-time police officer for the third candidate recently interviewed.

Mr. Birkholz stated that the negotiated wages for the conditional offers for police officers will be approved by the City Council at a future meeting.

Mr. Birkholz stated that the 2023 budget includes wages for four (4) full-time officers; and that adding an additional fifth (5th) full-time officer, would make the Police Department budget over budget.

III. Public Works Department – Equipment Purchase

Mr. Birkholz stated that the Public Works Department is requesting to purchase a utility task vehicle (UTV) for approximately \$24,000.00. He continued by stating that the Capital Equipment Plan budgeted \$22,000.00 in 2023 for this purchase.

Mr. Chris Bahr, Maintenance Supervisor, stated that the City would trade the 1978 open cab Ford tractor that is currently used by the Public Works Department for tasks that the UTV would be used for because of the following reasons:

- The tractor is hard to find parts for when repair and maintenance are needed.
- When spraying in the wind, the chemicals return and fall on the operator.

Mr. Bahr stated that the UTV is a smaller vehicle and could be driven in all areas of the parks for tasks.

Mr. Birkholz stated that the Park Commission voices complaints about park maintenance. The UTV will help with completing maintenance tasks, such as spraying weeds in the parks, which the tractor currently cannot do in those areas.

The City Council discussed the reasons for the purchase and the possible transition of City staff completing lawn mowing in the future. Mr. Birkholz stated that the UTV would be another vehicle to use in that process.

The City Council Members were not opposed to the purchase. Mr. Birkholz stated that the City Council would consider the purchase at a future City Council Meeting.

IV. Herald Journal Service Extension – Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Josh Eckstein, Bolton and Menk, Incorporated, stated that four (4) quotes have been obtained to complete the service extension, with Schneider Excavating providing the low quote. The project will not be awarded until the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is executed.

Mr. Eckstein reviewed and provided a copy of the draft MOU, and also reviewed the project. Mr. Eckstein noted that additional sewer and water connection fees of approximately \$6,200.00 need to be paid by the Herald Journal, in addition to the cost associated to the Herald Journal in the MOU.

Mr. Birkholz stated that the draft MOU was sent to the Herald Journal, and they responded that their cost of the project was much higher than they anticipated. He continued by stating that the City's portion is higher than the City anticipated also; initial numbers were estimates from old numbers. Mr. Birkholz stated that the Herald Journal requested to pay a lump sum portion of their cost and then defer the remainder of their project cost for approximately (90) ninety days.

The City Council Members discussed and did not oppose to a delay of payment for a portion of the project cost; however, they were opposed to waiving the water and sewer connection fees. The City Council stated that the connection fees should be paid by the Herald Journal, in addition to the Herald Journal's portion of the project cost.

Mr. Birkholz stated that he would contact the Herald Journal and the City Council would consider a final draft of an MOU for approval at a future City Council Meeting.

V. Storm Sewer Improvements – Project Scope

Mr. Birkholz stated that at the 2023 City Council Goal Setting Session, five (5) potential storm sewer improvement projects were reviewed. City staff is seeking additional clarification on what the scope of the project is for the year 2023.

Mr. Eckstein reviewed the five (5) proposed projects and stated that the locations of the projects were included in picture format in the City Council packet near the following locations:

1. *Fairlawn Avenue and 5th Street North* - City staff viewed this project as the highest priority.
2. *Sherman Avenue and 2nd Street South* – Lower priority due to upcoming improvements planned for Sherman Avenue estimated in the year 2027.
3. *Main Avenue and 4th Street*
4. *3rd Street South and Rosalie Avenue* – Could be included in planned street improvement project in the future.
5. *1st Street South and Sherman Avenue*

Mr. Birkholz stated that the total cost for all five (5) projects is approximately \$205,000.00, which has been budgeted for in the Streets Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) in the year 2023; however, costs for the City State Aid Highway (CSAH) 5 extension project and the Herald Journal utilities extension project are higher than anticipated.

Mr. Eckstein stated that in the City Engineer's opinion, projects one (1), five (5) and three (3) are the highest priority.

The City Council Members discussed completing three (3) projects in 2023 and the remaining two (2) projects in the future. They also discussed combining the projects into a bond that includes other projects like the street lighting project also.

Mr. Birkholz stated that he would contact the City's financial consultant and review information regarding bonding for projects at a future meeting.

VI. 121 Baker Avenue East – Progress Report

Mr. Birkholz stated that official notice was sent to the property owner stating that the City was clawing the property of 121 Baker Avenue East back because the contractual obligations were not met by the property owner. He continued by stating that the deadline for the property owner to sign the deed back to the City is March 12, 2023, which the property owner indicated would be done.

Mr. Birkholz stated that the Economic Development Authority (EDA) is scheduled to meet on March 23, 2023 and they will discuss how to handle advertising that the property is available for sale again. City staff will recommend that the EDA release another Request for Proposals for the property to be submitted in a specific timeframe, for the EDA to review and recommend on how to move forward.

VII. Other

The City Council Members discussed if a park installation is possible in the area of the Phase III Grass Lake Farm development of apartments, if it proceeds. Mr. Birkholz stated that the parkland requirement was met in the past for the entire Grass Lake Farms area, but is not available in this phase of development; it would be available in a future phase development.

VIII. Adjourn

Council Member Ebert motioned to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Ollig seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

The Work Session adjourned at 5:55p.m.

Steve Stotko

Steve Stotko
Mayor
City of Winsted

ATTEST:

Raquel Kirchoff

Raquel Kirchoff, CMC
City Clerk-Treasurer
City of Winsted