

City of Brownsville
Minutes of September 2, 2020 Regular Monthly Meeting

The regular monthly meeting of the Brownsville City Council was called to order by Mayor Allen Whitesitt at 7:00 PM with councilmembers Jeff LeJeune, Rick Voshart, Chelsey Leis and John Jangula present. Also present were Maureen Meiners, City Treasurer and Steve Schuldt, City Clerk and Casey Holzwarth, city maintenance. Guests in attendance were Jordan Gerard, Jeremy Leis, Brandon Frank, Sonja Burkhart, Dan Cady, Dave Hey, Neil Slifka, Minn. DNR, Gary Schulze and Chris Dvorak.

Minutes of the August 5, 2020 council meeting were read. Rick Voshart moved, second by Jeff LeJeune and the motion passed to approve the minutes.

Dave Hey informed council that he is working with Minnesota DNR for restoration of 26 acres that lies within city limits. Noxious plants are overtaking the acreage and DNR funding for maintenance assistance has stymied. He is proposing to graze goats on the property to control unwanted plants, especially buckthorn. Neil Slifka representing Minnesota DNR encouraged the use of goats as an economical method of controlling buckthorn without harming native plant species. An independent contractor would provide insurance, fence the area and provide for any other needs of the goats. The contractor would frequently monitor the herd and provide a water source. A typical contract will run for 2 to 3 years. Mr. Slifka informed council that there are active contracts in Rushford and there are no complaints regarding noise or other issues with the goats. Rick Voshart moved, second by Chelsey Leis and the motion passed to approve the proposed grazing contract.

7:15 pm: Mayor Whitesitt convened a public hearing to hear a variance request by Sonja Burkhart. Council reviewed the request to construct a garage behind their house at 706 Main Street. Drawings of the proposed garage showing setbacks were presented to the council by Dan Cady, a builder from Winona, MN. The variance request is to allow a 2' setback from the east property line versus 10'. Burkhart provided a waiver from the easterly neighbor, Erica Kies agreeing to the variance. The variance also requested a 6' setback from the ally versus 10' on the north end of the property. The west setback is to be a minimum of 10' to comply with ordinance requirements. Chelsey Leis moved, second by John Jangula and the motion passed to approve the building permit with variances as presented. Rick Voshart moved, second by Jeff LeJeune and the motion passed to adjourn the public hearing at 7:35 pm.

Council discussed a nuisance violation at the corner of North 7th Street and Division Street due an accumulation of old farm machinery and other accumulated personal property. Council members commented that they have received complaints regarding the situation. Mayor Whitesitt moved to charge the owner with a nuisance violation. The motion failed due to a lack of a second. Rick Voshart volunteered to speak with the owner before issuing a violation charge.

John Jangula questioned why a resident received a notice regarding tires on their property. Maureen Meiners explained that the council had contracted with Driftless Region Vector Control to check for mosquito breeding habitat and to notify those residents having mosquito breeding conditions on their property.

Mayor Whitesitt informed council that Jeremy and Chelsey Leis have requested that an address be assigned to their garage which was constructed in 2016. Council was informed that a sewer assessment was never collected for the property. The current assessment due amount is \$3,600.00. Mr. Leis commented that city was informed of the sewer connection in 2016 and that the sewer assessment should have been collected at that time. Leis stated that the city doesn't have the right to collect payment after the fact. He stated that he would have paid the assessment in 2016 if required to do so. Mayor Whitesitt commented that the building permit indicates a building height of 12 feet but the structure is considerably higher than 12 feet. Mr. Leis replied that the city clerk in 2016 was informed of the change in height and okayed the change. Mayor Whitesitt offered Mr. Leis a compromise in which he would pay the City of Brownsville \$1,800.00 in satisfaction of the required \$3,600.00 payment and to begin regular monthly sewer and garbage payments for the new address. Mr. Leis requested

that he be allowed to seek council prior to making the decision. Mr. Leis then offered to pay \$1,800.00 to satisfy the assessment and begin making regular monthly sewer/garbage payments to the city. Rick Voshart moved, second by John Jangula and the motion passed to accept \$1,800.00 as settlement of their sewer assessment obligation, begin monthly sewer/garbage payments and assign the property its own address of 605-B Main Street, Brownsville, MN. The motion was passed with Chelsey Leis abstaining.

Casey Holzwarth presented council with a proposal to enter into a lease contract for a new Bobcat S64 skid loader in which a one time payment of \$5,000.00 allows the use of the machine for a period of 24 months with total hours restricted to 600 and tire wear to 50%. Bobcat of the Coulee Region will purchase the current machine for \$34,290.95. The current machine has an unpaid loan balance of \$15,198.05. Rick Voshart moved, second by Jeff LeJeune and the motion passed to enter into the lease agreement. Mr. Holzwarth informed council that repairs at Benton and 9th Streets have been completed. The Lee Court lift station is functioning and is nearing final completion of repairs. Crack sealing at Marina Drive is to be completed this month. Holzwarth requested clarity regarding Jim Hakes concern about the street near his home. Jeff LeJeune will reach out to Hakes for more information. Holzwarth requested funding to replace a culvert on 6th Street. John Jangula moved, second by Chelsey Leis to move forward with replacement.

Brandon Frank, speaking on behalf of the fire department, informed council of their extractor purchase and other personal protection equipment to be funded by the CARES Act grant. Council was informed that all 300 chicken BBQ dinner tickets have been sold and that there are only 25 raffle tickets available for sale. Council was informed that Friends of the Brownsville Fire Department, a non-profit organization, is now a registered entity. Mr. Frank also mentioned that the fire department is looking for new personnel to join the department.

City Clerk Steve Schuldt informed council that a 2021 city budget is not yet completed but would be available later this month. Rick Voshart moved, second by Jeff LeJeune and the motion passed to increase the prior year general levy by 4% to \$112,444.00 plus \$25,000.00 bond reduction levy with the assumption that the levy can be decreased if the 2021 budget warrants. There was no new information to report regarding CARES Act. Council was informed that a new tenant is occupying the former Copper Penny restaurant doing business as Mobile Marine Repair. The owner is Travis Tenkley and he will be offering winter storage of boats around the property and asked if boat storage would be an issue. Council by consensus agreed to boat storage as long it did not interfere with traffic.

City Treasurer Maureen Meiners informed council on August 10th of her pending retirement effective December 31, 2020 and the need to advertise for a replacement. Mayor Whitesitt requested that she prepare a job description to help advertise the position. Mayor Whitesitt thanked Ms. Meiners for her years of service and allowing the city ample time to find a replacement.

Council members reviewed the claims payable list. Rick Voshart moved, second by John Jangula and the motion passed to approve the claims.

At 9:15 pm, Jeff LeJeune moved, second by Chelsey Leis and the motion passed to adjourn the meeting.

Steve Schuldt, City Clerk

Allen Whitesitt, Mayor