MINUTES OF A STUDY SESSION OF THE PRINCETON CITY COUNCIL
HELD ON FEBRUARY 6 2020 4:30 P.M.

Mayor Brad Schumacher called the meeting to order. Council members present were Jack EDMONDS, Jenny GEROLD, Jules ZIMMER and Jeff REYNOLDS. Staff present, Administrator Robert Barbian, Finance Director Steve Jackson, Public Works Director Bob Gerold, Community Development Specialist Stephanie Hillesheim, Police Chief Todd Frederick, Clerk Shawna Jenkins, Wastewater Plant Manager Chris Klinghagen, Liquor Store Manager Nancy Campbell, Fire Chief Ron Lawrence and Attorney Damien Toven.

**Firefighter Compensation**

Lawrence advised that the firefighters put their life on the line every time they respond to a call. From driving to the station to responding to any type of call. This also takes the firefighters away from their families and family events. The training demands also put a strain on the firefighters and their families. I am very fortunate to have a great fire department and firefighters. Their dedication to the community is second to none.

Firefighters are currently making $10/hr. In 2003, we took a $1/hr cut in pay to help offset the deficit that the City was in. We got that $1/hr back in 2006. We have not had a raise since then. Our great fire department is made up of volunteers throughout the community. A nation-wide problem of decreased volunteerism is growing, and volunteers are becoming harder to obtain. We strive to take care of our volunteers as best we can. The townships and City of Princeton have been very good to the fire department since I became Chief. We have gotten some new and safer equipment. We have also been able to upgrade our fleet.

He is asking for approval from the City Council to give the firefighters a $1/hr raise to be effective 01/01/2020. This raise is within my budget and will not increase the costs to the townships or City.

The Captains are at $11 per hour, and assistant Chief is at $12 per hour.

While the hourly rate has not increased, there have been some changes over the years, such as being paid for training, which they were not previously.

The council would like to see what firefighters in other local departments receive for pay to see if these numbers are in line with other departments.

Lawrence added that his budget is planned for an increase of $1 per hour.

J GEROLD stated she will abstain from voting.

REYNOLDS MOVED TO APPROVE THE PAY INCREASE OF $1 PER HOUR FOR THE FIREFIGHTERS. ZIMMER SECONDED THE MOTION.

Lawrence added that he will request pay information from other local departments.

VOTE 4:0:1 REYNOLDS, ZIMMER, EDMONDS AND SCHUMACHER IN FAVOR. J GEROLD ABSTAINED, THE MOTION CARRIED.

**Public Safety Storage Building**

Frederick reported that the Princeton Fire Department’s cold storage building collapsed March of 2019. The building stored the Incident Command Trailer, Fire Safety Trailer, Light tower, Trench rescue equipment and miscellaneous fire equipment. Since the loss of the building the fire department has been storing items outside and at various storage locations within the city. The City of Princeton received insurance money for the total loss of the building. The insurance payout is $122,000.00. Insurance typically allows 2 years for reimbursement for replacement construction costs on a commercial project. This means that the con-
Construction and billing needs to be completed by March 2021. To complete prior to March of 2021 construction of the replacement building is best to occur the summer of 2020.

The Princeton Police Department cold storage building also has deficiencies as it is an old hanger similar to the hanger that collapsed. There is no electricity, during warmer winter days, water accumulates in the hanger and then freezes making for unsafe conditions. During the spring the hanger floods and remains this way for a few weeks. Both situations make it difficult to access and store equipment. At this time, with the storage of the fire department equipment there is no room to secure evidence that we have normally stored in this building. How evidence is stored is also becoming increasingly more important as seized property can become a liability. Adding police evidence storage space to the construction of fire department storage brings an economy of scale to the project.

Over the past six months we have researched adding to the existing building and the cost to build a new storage building for both the Princeton Fire and Police Department. The cost to add an additional storage area to the current building is approximately 120.00 per square foot or $720,000.00 of same or similar construction for the shell of the building with no build out inside. In addition to the higher cost another consideration is that the diminished accessibility for the remainder of the lot.

Another option explored is building a 60 X 104-foot stand-alone building. We would propose to set the building to the lot North of the Princeton Public Safety Building west parking area for ease of efficient access and security. After researching this building with contractors, we estimate the cost would not exceed $225,000.00 provided we sub contract out the main elements of construction.

The main elements of the project are as follows:
1. Excavation/grading
2. Framing
3. Over-head doors, Service doors & windows
4. Concrete
5. Insulation
6. Electrical, including outlets and lights

We have received some of the estimates for the parts listed above. Additional quotes would be obtained if this is the route decided upon. The building is planned as cold storage so plumbing would not be considered.

A step to start is to have a site plan for the building completed so a grading plan can be established. This will also be used to obtain more accurate quotes. To proceed WSB will be needed to layout the building and site. Authorization to proceed is requested.

J Gerold asked if the estimated cost of $225,000 is with staff doing the project management and getting separate bids. Frederick some savings with them doing the project management, getting separate bids and some internal work that staff could do as well. To keep costs down. J Gerold questioned if lot 7 would no longer be sellable. Barbian replied that Lot 7 has been somewhat set aside for various city usages being it is adjacent to the Public Safety Building.

Staff will bring this back to the Council at the February 13th meeting.

Council Goals
Schumacher wanted to add the removal of the cross-wind runway from the City’s plan under #9 on the short-term items, and sewer system to the 7th Ave project.

B Gerold explained that MnDOT wants the West Branch entrance removed, so the thought was to add the 13th intersection, which is why that was put on the list.

Barbian will make the changes as discussed and send out an updated list that the Council can use to rate each item;

J Gerold reported on the PUC meeting on the 22nd. Greg Hanson was appointed as Chair. They are sitting well with their reserves for the water department, but electric is only at about 90 days, and they would like to get that to 180 days.

They are concerned about possible changes of the “in lieu of taxes”. She suggested that Butcher attend the Council Study Sessions and that Electric Superintendent Grant attend the Monday Manager meetings. Butcher has sent her an email on his suggestions regarding meeting attendance, and she will read through that and report back to the Council.

**PUC Payment in Lieu of taxes**

Schumacher stated that the plan he had staff include in the agenda packet is based on one that Elk River has in place.

Zimmer added that it is good that we are looking at this since it has not been adjusted since 2007. He would like to see a couple council members, and the City Administrator sit down with PUC and work out a place that works for them and the City.

Schumacher stated that the Council should come up with a plan so we have a base to start with in negotiations. J Gerold suggested staggering the increase over a few years.

Zimmer asked if staff could get some numbers from other SMMPA members to see how they handle it in their communities.

**Accept Mindi Siercks Resignation as Public Utilities Chairperson**

Jenkins reported that she received the resignation letter in the mail today. It was scanned in and sent out to the Council.

Reynolds asked if we want to advertise the open seat. J Gerold responded that the Council needs to first accept her resignation.

Toven added that it is best to accept it with the March 31st date she listed as the effective date.

Zimmer moved to accept Mindi Siercks resignation from the PUC effective March 31, 2020. Reynolds seconded the motion. Vote 4:1, Edmonds opposed. The motion carried.

Schumacher asked if we should advertise or select someone. Reynolds responded that he would like to see it advertised. Schumacher suggested selecting the current PUC Liaison to finish Siercks term. Toven stated he is not sure if that would be allowed. Schumacher re-
sponded that the Ordinance states there can be one council member on the Public Utility Commission.

Zimmer stated he feels by appointing a Council person, it would be taking away that opportunity for residents that would be interested. With the last term that was filled, there were several applicants that were interested.

Edmonds would like it to be advertised and open to applicants.

Tim Hennagir asked where that was located in the Ordinance. Hillesheim looked it up and stated it is in section 290.03.

SCHUMACHER MOVED TO APPOINT PUC LIAISON JENNY GEROLD TO FINISH MINDI SIERCKS TERM THAT ENDS ON DECEMBER 31, 2020. REYNOLDS SECONDED THE MOTION. VOTE 3:2 ZIMMER AND EDMONDS OPPOSED,

Toven stated that Councilor J Gerold should refrain from voting as it could be considered a Conflict of Interest. Schumacher stated that Council members vote for themselves when the Liaison’s are chosen and said this should not be any different.

J Gerold stated that if it is not illegal for her to vote, the vote would stand at 3:2

THE MOTION CARRIED 3:2

*** Closed Session *** - consideration of land purchase – Statute 13D.05, Subd 3

REYNOLDS MOVED TO CLOSE THE MEETING AT 6:21PM. J GEROLD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

REYNOLDS MOVED TO CLOSE THE MEETING AT 7:11PM. ZIMMER SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Toven reported that the City Council had a continuation of discussions regarding a proposed land purchase. Negotiations have been ongoing at last meeting. If an agreed upon price is determined, a purchase agreement will be reviewed and approved in an open meeting at an upcoming meeting.

Adjournment

J GEROLD MOVED TO ADJOURN THE STUDY SESSION AT 7:12PM. REYNOLDS SECONDED THE MOTION. MEETING ADJOURNED

Respectfully Submitted,

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Shawna Jenkins Tadych
City Clerk

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ATTEST:

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Brad Schumacher, Mayor