

**OAK GROVE COUNCIL**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, April 8, 2024**

The Regular Meeting of the Oak Grove City Council was called to order by Mayor Rolf at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, April 8, 2024. Pledge of Allegiance was said, and roll call taken.

Present:            Weston Rolf, Mayor  
                      Angie Bray Johnson, Council Member  
                      Paul Tradewell, Council Member  
                      John West, Council Member  
                      Mike Wylie, Council Member

Also Present: Loren Wickham, City Administrator  
                  Billi Larson, City Clerk  
                  Rob Engler, Fire Chief  
                  Chuck Schwartz, Engineer

**1. PUBLIC FORUM**

After calls for public comment and hearing none, Mayor Rolf closed the public forum.

**2. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mayor Rolf took a moment to thank those that attended the open house on Tuesday, March 26<sup>th</sup> for the proposed new City Hall/Fire Station project.

There were no other announcements.

**3. SETTING OF REGULAR AGENDA**

Mayor Rolf asked to move item 9 (B) Fire Station/City Hall Discussion to just after the Consent Agenda portion of the meeting.

**MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL TO APPROVE THE REGULAR AGENDA WITH THE REQUESTED CHANGE. MOTION CARRIED. (5-0)**

**4. APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING MARCH 25, 2024**

**MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES. MOTION CARRIED. (5-0)**

**5. SHERIFF'S REPORT MARCH 2024**

Lt. Knotz provided the stats for March 2024 that included 247 calls for service. He broke down each of the calls by type. Out of the 247 calls for service there were 172 traffic stops and 32 traffic arrests. At Mayor Rolf's request, he also explained that a traffic arrest is a traffic stop that a citation was issued. There were also 28 medical calls in March.

**6. PETITIONS, INDIVIDUALS, PRESENTATIONS, AND INQUIRIES**

a.     Prosecuting Attorney, Scott Baumgartner

Mr. Baumgartner provided the annual Oak Grove criminal disposition statistics. He complimented the professionalism, thoroughness, and ease in which it is to work with the officers dedicated to Oak Grove stating that they make his job easier.

Mr. Baumgartner provided a presentation that showed the offense comparison by year over a span of ten years. In 2023 his office saw an increase in Gross Misdemeanor DUIs from 13 in 2021 and 2022 to 24 in 2023. He noted that the trend with DUI's is changing in two ways. They are seeing higher blood Alcohol levels and the time of day of the offenses.

## 7. CONSENT AGENDA

*The Consent Agenda contains several items, which are acted upon by the Council in one motion. Upon request by any one Councilmember, City staff, or the public a consent agenda item may be removed and put on the regular agenda for discussion and consideration.*

- a. Claims and Accounts
- b. Resolution 24-048 Approving Development Agreement for Timbers Hideaway
- c. Resolution 24-050 Approve Hiring Accounting Specialist

**MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WYLIE, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED. (5-0)**

## 8. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Resolution 24-033 Oak Grove Conservation, LLC – Minor Subdivision
- B. Resolution 24-040 MNDOT Detour Agreement

Administrator Wickham stated that Resolution 24-033 was on the agenda for the March 11, 2024 and March 25, 2024 meetings and it was tabled. There is no additional information provided and the applicant has requested this continue to be tabled until further notice.

**MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL TO TABLE RESOLUTION 24-033. MOTION CARRIED. (5-0)**

Engineer, Chuck Schwartz, discussed the safety of pushing the detour out to Lake George Blvd and discussed that the increase in cars in the 4:00pm hour would go from 100 to 1,000. It was decided to table this item to discuss further.

**MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST TO TABLE RESOLUTION 24-040. MOTION CARRIED. (5-0)**

## 9. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES & DISCUSSION ITEMS

- A. Resolution 24-049 Charitable Gambling Requests

Staff had received three Gambling Fund requests:

- i. St. Francis All Night Graduation – Graduation Party 2024
- ii. St. Francis Track & Field/Cross Country Booster Club – Purchase of new jump pit
- iii. St. Francis Fastpitch Association – Equipment

Mayor Rolf discussed that 10% of the money spent on gambling (pull tabs) in Oak Grove comes back to the city. He stated that there are several items that the money can be used for and gave examples of giving back to kids in the community or the Fire Department for equipment. He noted some of the past donations and discussed the process the Council uses to distribute the funds.

Councilmember West asked him to clarify that the process they use is not written in stone and evolves.

Mayor Rolf stated that in 2024 the city has \$24,190 to utilize and for the Spring requests \$4,000.

Council member West made a motion to give \$1,000 to each of the three requests. Councilmember Tradewell seconded.

### Andrea Schoenrock – St. Francis All Night Graduation Party

Ms. Schoenrock discussed the other events they have had to raise money and spoke on behalf of giving more money to track for the pit instead of giving the graduation party more money. Her group is looking to offer a few scholarships to the party for kids that wouldn't be able to go otherwise and urged the Council to give a larger donation towards the pit instead.

Councilmember West amended his original motion to give \$500 to the St. Francis All Night Graduation Party, \$1,500 to St. Francis Track & Field/Cross Country and \$1,000 to St. Francis Fastpitch Association.

**MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 24-049 WITH \$500 GOING TO ST. FRANCIS ALL NIGHT GRADUATION PARTY, \$1,500 GOING TO ST. FRANCIS TRACK/CROSS COUNTRY, AND \$1,000 GOING TO ST. FRANCIS FASTPITCH. MOTION CARRIED. (5-0)**

B. Fire Station/City Hall Discussion

Mayor Rolf called for anyone wishing to comment on the proposed Fire Station/City Hall to come forward.

Gerry Marko – 1967 191<sup>st</sup> Ave

Mr. Marko stated that he has lived in Oak Grove for 8 years and is a business owner. His ask of the Council is to look at every issue and the solution before building a new structure that would impact the residents that are on fixed incomes or those struggling with the current economy.

Rich Vierkant – 20160 Vintage Drive

Mr. Vierkant stated that he responded to the online survey. He stated that he is retired and has seen the biggest tax increase this year than all of the 30 years he's lived in Oak Grove. He asked the Council to consider other solutions before building a new structure.

Lucas Rominger – 3330 194<sup>th</sup> Lane

Mr. Rominger stated that Oak Grove had the highest tax increase in the County. He questioned the age of the building and wondered if modernizations would be possible instead of a new structure.

Bryan Stuttgen – 19807 Nightingale Street

Mr. Stuttgen stated that he wants to see more transparency around the proposal because he doesn't trust government. He tried to gain access to the Oak Grove Community page on Facebook and was unsuccessful. He stated that he is not opposed to doing something but is concerned about the cost. He asked if the public is seeing all the costs associated with the proposal.

Cheryl Vierkant – 20160 Vintage Drive

Mrs. Vierkant stated that she has lived in Oak Grove for 30 years. She stated that during those 30 years and paid the taxes they wondered what services they are receiving for those tax dollars.

Scott Schwartz – 22619 Zion Parkway

Mr. Schwartz asked what the process and timeline was for determining the outcome of the proposal. Mayor Rolf discussed that deciding on a design, requesting bids, and construction wouldn't happen for at least a year. The earliest residents would see a tax impact would be 2026 if the Council chose to move forward with the project.

Duane Ferrario – 3300 194<sup>th</sup> Lane

Mr. Ferrario noted that in the last 12 months he saw property value go down and tax rate go up. He feels it's important to look at the needs and move forward accordingly.

Brent Johnson – 2587 194<sup>th</sup> Lane

Mr. Johnson was curious to know if costs to remedy the mold/ventilation/Fire Department addition were obtained so a comparison be made. What it would cost to remedy issues versus building a new structure.

Mayor Rolf responded that those numbers had not been obtained yet and that Council plans to discuss on how to move forward.

Mr. Johnson commented that he would like to see the Council obtain costs to fix issues so a comparison can be made to determine if now is the right time to build a new structure.

Brad Johnson – 3865 193<sup>rd</sup> Lane

Mr. Johnson stated that he attends all the meetings and hears all the deliberations on budgets. He reads

the information provided by the city on the website in addition to the information sent from the County. He pointed out that the information provided about the increase percentages has a lot more behind it than just the percentage.

Mr. Johnson discussed touring the Fire Department and seeing for himself that safety hazards that the Firefighters are dealing with. He stated that the time is not ideal with the County wanting to build a new jail and the cost of law enforcement going up but something does need to be done and the costs for whichever option is chosen will continue to go up the more time that passes.

#### Sam Schudi – 21915 Lake George Boulevard

Mr. Schudi stated that he's lived in Oak Grove for 28 years and had different arrangements with different people here. He commented that his property taxes went up 18% this year and another vacant parcel near parkland that has seen a 400% increase over the last five years. He stated that it is no fault of the Council. He stated that something needs to be done with this property and take steps to reduce costs.

#### Curt Hallermann – 20350 Edelweiss Street

Mr. Hallermann has been a Firefighter for 38 years and an Oak Grove Firefighter for 23 years. He provided some recent statistics on hidden dangers for firefighters. He spoke about the importance of decontamination after fighting a fire and showers being vital to that. The current Fire Station does not have showers. He thanked the Council for their transparency and stated that this conversation has been taking place since he was the Fire Chief 13 years ago.

Council member Wylie commented that he is retired also and that he is not looking forward to paying additional taxes. He stated that he works part time at Lake George Regional Park. He stated that he feels that the Council is a pretty conservative group and will do all they can to keep costs down. He believes that something needs to be done. There are several issues that need to be addressed. Trip hazards that could lead to workman's compensation issues or lawsuits. He also knows that the lack of decontamination stations is a huge issue. He commented that this is very early in the conversation. He spoke to the mold and mechanical issues within City Hall. He thinks something needs to be done but hasn't decided on what avenue to take.

Council member Tradewell commented that there are two philosophies, the buy cheap and replace often philosophy and the buy quality and buy once philosophy. He commented that he's watched with the current building that there has been add on after add on that have costed more in the long run than building what fit the needs from the beginning. He stated that he doesn't want to see the Council "kick the can" down the road for it to be a future problem.

Council member West agreed with both Council members Wylie and Tradewell and he commented that he has been talking about this issue for a couple years and his concern for people on fixed incomes. He does not want to see people move out of the city because they can't afford to live here, however he knows something does need to be done. He stated that one lawsuit from a firefighter getting hurt would be over the \$15M of the build price. He commented that the Council needs to look at every factor when making the decision. He questioned if \$15M is the right number or if building on again is the answer. He doesn't know the answer but is sure they will get there. He encouraged citizens to reach out to the members to have discussions. He stated that he wants to take care of the firefighters because they do a phenomenal job for the city for very little money. He stated that we have to do something.

Council member Bray Johnson agreed with the other members and stated that when she first started attending Council meetings this issue was discussed. When she was campaigning, she talked about this when she went door to door. She stated that this is not a new conversation and they have been transparent for a long time. She too encouraged citizens to reach out to have conversations and that they value that feedback.

Mayor Rolf added that he has been in Law Enforcement for 24 years. His goal is to have the Sheriff's Department start here and end here. He talked about shift changes in Andover and that there is 2 hours a day that there is no coverage in the city. He also commented that he'd like Allina to be housed in the

City too. It would cut response times for medical calls because they are averaging 19 minutes. He commented that it's possible that we could lose firefighters to St. Francis due to their new facility. He addressed the concern about the money. He spoke about using \$400,000 out of reserves to not have a tax increase in the past tax year and that money could have been used towards a new Fire Department. He encouraged citizens to come to a budget work session.

Council member West asked to see what the demolition costs would be for the current building.

Administrator Wickham noted the Spring Recycle Day will be held at City Hall this year on Saturday, April 27, 2024 from 8-12 and the price sheet is available on the city website.

## 10. MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS/UPDATES

Council member Bray Johnson commented that she has received some complaints regarding Rum River Consultants. She stated that the complaints were in regards to RRC failing to return citizen phone calls. She asked to have that addressed as this is poor customer service.

She also addressed the issue of a resident with pigeons. She asked if there was any additional information regarding the enforcement action.

Administrator Wickham stated that it is an open enforcement action and that it is a slow process. He further explained that property owner's have rights. They are notified of the complaint and given time to respond or comply which is usually 30 days. If they do not comply a citation is issued.

Council member Tradewell asked about the procedure of when someone calls to get an update on an enforcement matter, he wondered if they should be calling the City or Rum River Consultants.

Administrator Wickham stated that Rum River Consultants has asked to take the calls regarding code enforcement issues.

Council member West took the time to thank Public Works for removing the snow in a timely fashion and stated that he receives compliments that Oak Grove's streets are plowed before surrounding communities. He also thanked the city staff for their hard work.

Council member Wylie stated that he has a list of complaints regarding Rum River Consultants and will bring the list when Rum River comes to a Council meeting.

Council member Tradewell did not have anything additional to add.

Mayor Rolf stated that he has spoken with the election integrity group and he thinks that the Council can't go as far as hand counting ballots but doing a post-election review that is essentially a hand count should be an option. He would like a precinct to be selected at random for the review but he is not getting any support from the County. He encouraged citizens to contact the County Commissioners to request support for an automatic post-election review for Oak Grove.

Council member Bray Johnson would like to see all the races counted in the review instead of just one.

***The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 29, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.***

## 11. ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER WYLIE TO ADJOURN. MOTION CARRIED. (4-1 WEST). The meeting was adjourned at 8:04p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Billi Larson  
City Clerk