

OAK GROVE COUNCIL
Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 12, 2024

The Regular Meeting of the Oak Grove City Council was called to order by Mayor Rolf at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, November 12, 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
 Britt Pease, Deputy City Clerk
 Andy Knotz, Lieutenant
 Chuck Schwartz, City Engineer
 Joe Sathe, City Attorney
 Karri Thorsten, Abdo Financial Solutions

RECESS REGULAR MEETING
CONVENE CITY CANVASSING BOARD

Canvass the returns and declare the results of the election, then consider signing and adopting Resolution 24-116 which is the official certification.

Mayor Rolf recessed the meeting at 6:01 PM and convened the Canvassing Board.

CANVASSING BOARD

Mayor Rolf noted that Council member Tradewell and Council member Wylie were reelected as Council members. Mike Wylie received 3,408 votes, Paul Tradewell received 2,932 votes, and Kevin Shepherd received 1,441 votes. There were 67 write-ins. There was a total of 6,173 voters.

Administrator Wickham added that there was over 90% voter turnout in all four precincts.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-116, CANVASS ELECTION RESULTS. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

The regular meeting was reconvened at 6:03 PM.

1. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council member West congratulated Council member Wylie and Council member Tradewell for getting reelected. He thanked the election judges and staff who worked at the election. He announced the tree lighting event on December 6th at 6:30 PM.

Council member Bray Johnson congratulated Council member Wylie and Council member Tradewell for getting reelected. She thanked City staff and election judges. She mentioned she served as an election judge and noted that there is a lot of work that goes into it. She added her

appreciation for Deputy Clerk Pease.

Council member Wylie thanked community members for their support.

Mayor Rolf expressed his appreciation for Deputy Clerk Pease and election judges. He mentioned those who ran for City Council ran a clean campaign.

2. SETTING OF REGULAR AGENDA

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL TO APPROVE THE REGULAR AGENDA AS PRESENTED. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER WYLIE. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

3. PUBLIC FORUM

Peter Bushman – 777 221st Avenue NW

Mr. Bushman explained that he is speaking on behalf of Immaculate Heart of Mary and that they had previously come to the Council about rezoning for the land they were looking to purchase off Holly Street and 221st Avenue NW. He explained that they were able to purchase the land and are putting plans together about what that will look like. He thanked the Council for their approval of the rezoning.

Richard Klababchek – 19519 Lake George Boulevard

Mr. Klababchek reminded the Council that the County Canvassing Board meeting is tomorrow at 2:00 PM at the Government Center. He read a speech about counting the votes.

4. APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES

A. City Council Minutes – October 28, 2024

Mayor Rolf mentioned that he had abstained from the vote for the previous minutes, but it had said that it passed 5-0. Administrator Wickham replied that they would make the correction.

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST TO APPROVE THE CITY COUNCIL MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 28, 2024, AS CORRECTED ABOVE. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON. MOTION CARRIED (5-0).

5. 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 24-117 Hiring Temporary Seasonal On-Call Snow Plow Driver - Lund
- C. Resolution 24-118 Charitable Gambling – St. Francis Madrigal Choir
- D. Resolution 24-119 Donation for Lighting Event - IPS

Council member Tradewell pulled item D from the Consent Agenda to give recognition to IPS for their donation.

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WYLIE TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS A, B, C. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST. MOTION CARRIED (5-0).

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA ITEM D. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER WYLIE. MOTION CARRIED (4-0-1 WEST).

6. SHERIFF

A. October Report

Lieutenant Knotz reported that in October there were 286 calls for service, including 1 burglary, 6 theft, 2 assault, 2 criminal damage to property, 6 personal injury accident, 24 property damage accidents, 25 medicals, 28 animal complaints, 8 alarms, 5 felony arrest, 8 gross misdemeanor arrests, 6 misdemeanor arrests, 4 DUI arrests, 1 drug arrest, 2 domestic assault arrest, 3 warrant arrests, 177 traffic stops, and 33 traffic arrests.

Council member West noted that there was a spike in property damage and asked why. Lieutenant Knotz replied that there are a lot of car deer crashes this time of year.

Council member Bray Johnson asked why thefts were increased during October. Lieutenant Knotz replied that he did not know why that was and encouraged residents to keep items locked up.

Mayor Rolf asked Lieutenant Knotz to address the gift package that many community members have received that included a QR code. Lieutenant Knotz explained that there is a scam that includes a package or a letter that includes a QR code. The scam tricks people to scan the QR code because then it will make the phone vulnerable in order to steal information. He cautioned community members from scanning unknown QR codes.

7. FINANCE

A. 3rd Quarter Financial Report – Abdo Financial Solutions

Karri Thorsten, Abdo Financial Solutions presented the 3rd Quarter Financial Report.

B. 2025 Preliminary Utility Fund Budget

Ms. Thorsten reviewed the 2025 Preliminary Utility Fund Budget.

Mayor Rolf stated it would be worth doing a utility rate study next year.

Council member West asked what the cost of a study like that would be. Ms. Thorsten replied that she did not have an estimate but could create a proposal and present it back to the Council.

Council member Tradewell asked if there was an administrative fee included. Administrator Wickham replied that there is an administrative fee included since the City has to take care of its own infrastructure and cover its maintenance and operation costs.

Council member Tradewell noted that the account has a negative figure and wondered why that was the case. Administrator Wickham replied that equipment that could fail is budgeted for, and that does not always happen. Council member Tradewell requested looking at the utility rates.

C. Resolution 24-120 Approving the Transfer of Funds – Asset Acquisition Fund

Mayor Rolf mentioned he had requested that the funds get transferred to the Asset Acquisition Fund in order to offset the Fire Department step system.

Administrator Wickham stated that staff do not recommend approving the Resolution tonight and instead to wait until 2025 since the council intends to apply the transfer of funds to the 2025 budget.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER WYLIE TO WITHDRAW RESOLUTION 24-120 APPROVING THE TRANSFER OF FUNDS – ASSET ACQUISITION FUND. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST. MOTION CARRIED (5-0).

8. FIRE DEPARTMENT

A. Oak Grove Fire Relief Association Request for Pension Increase for Years of Service – Resolution 24-121

Vice President of Fire Relief Association Jim Stafki made a formal request to increase the retirement benefit \$800 per year of service. The purpose of the increase would be to increase recruitment or retention. Benefit increases will address recruitment and retention challenges, increased call volumes and demands, and alignment with similar-sized cities.

Mayor Rolf asked what St. Francis and East Bethel have for a pension. Mr. Stafki replied that he had looked up cities covered by PERA. He believed that St. Francis had a lower benefit level.

Council member Wylie asked how the City would be affected if a lot of firefighters retired in the same year. Mr. Stafki replied that accrued liability is factored into the analysis. Administrator Wickham added that up to \$5,200 the City does not have to make a mandatory contribution. The City should not have a mandatory contribution with the change.

Mayor Rolf expressed his concern regarding the \$5,800. He mentioned that he does not think the Fire Department needs to respond to all of the medical calls which could help with the stress of the amount of calls since there is a 24-hour deputy in place. He explained that he would be interested in raising the amount a little more than \$5,200.

Council member West expressed his support for the \$5,800. Mayor Rolf stated he was not against the increase, and explained that there are big expenses coming up for the Fire Department. He added that he would not want the City to be in a position where they would have to make a mandatory contribution.

Council member Bray Johnson stated she was in support of the increase and added that not all of the deputies are trained for medical calls like the Fire Department.

Council member Tradewell stated he would be more comfortable with \$5,500. Council member Wylie stated he was in support of the \$5,800 in order to compete with surrounding cities.

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-121 INCREASING PENSION BENEFIT LEVEL FOR FIREFIGHTERS YEARS OF SERVICE. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON. MOTION CARRIED (4-1 ROLF).

9. CONSULTING ENGINEER

A. Engineer Updates

Engineer Schwartz updated the Council that the turn lane at Silverrod Street NW and there have been no recorded crashes in the last 10 years at the intersection. Council member West clarified that the intersection was 194th Avenue NW and Silverrod Street NW. He added that he would be interested in having law enforcement be a presence there since many people pass on the right.

Engineer Schwartz mentioned that he would be bringing to the Council the 2025 road improvement plans in the future. The rough estimates are a bit higher than what is budgeted.

B. Resolution 24-122 Final Acceptance – Smith Grove Third Addition

Engineer Schwartz stated the Smith Grove Third Addition is complete. The warranty period will begin October 11, 2024.

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-122 ACCEPTING SMITH GROW THIRD ADDITION DEVELOPMENT. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADWELL. MOTION CARRIED (5-0).

C. Resolution 24-123 Final Acceptance – JP Farms

Engineer Schwartz mentioned the warranty period would begin May 9, 2024.

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WYLIE TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-123 ACCEPTING JP FARMS DEVELOPMENT. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON. MOTION CARRIED (5-0).

10. CITY ATTORNEY

A. Election update

Attorney Sathe reviewed with the Council options for electronic pollbooks.

Mayor Rolf stated he would like to continue moving forward with showing the integrity of the election process. He added that he would like to see what happens at the Canvassing Board meeting before making a decision. The Council agreed.

Council member Wylie asked when the Joint Powers Agreement would be due. Attorney Sathe replied in 2026 right after the next election. Council member Wylie asked what would happen if the City did not resign the Joint Powers Agreement. Attorney Sathe replied that a lot of the administrative costs for the election would transition to the City.

Council member Bray Johnson noted that the County reported late. There were about 600 absentee ballots that were returned between 3:00 and 8:00 PM. She mentioned she spoke with Pam LeBlanc who is the Chief Officer of Property Records and Taxation at Anoka County. She added that Ms. LeBlanc mentioned that Anoka County is typically one of the first counties to report after an election. Council member West noted that Minnesota did a terrible job at reporting this year.

Administrator Wickham noted that he and Ms. Pease would meet with the election judges and assistant election judges for a debriefing meeting.

Ms. Eskleson, head election judge, suggested hiring someone to help the City Clerk with all of the details with the election since it is a lot of work.

11. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES & DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Geotechnical Proposal for Fire Station/City Hall Project

Administrator Wickham reported that the City received several quotes for the geotechnical proposal and mentioned that staff recommends accepting the proposal from Terracon.

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST TO APPROVE THE GEOTECHNICAL PROPOSAL FROM TERRACON. SECOND BY TRADEWELL. MOTION CARRIED (5-0).

B. Resolution 24-124 URRWMO JPA

Administrator Wickham noted there are no recommended changes to the agreement.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER WYLIE TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-124 APPROVING THE UPPER RUM RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT. SECOND BY BRAY JOHNSON.

Council member West asked if he and Council member Tradewell would need to abstain from the vote. Attorney Sathe replied that it would be reasonable to do so.

MOTION CARRIED (3-0-2 TRADEWELL, WEST ABSTAINED).

C. Abdo Financial Services Contract

Administrator Wickham reviewed the Abdo Financial Services contract with the Council.

Council member West asked if it was the same scheduled increase as in the past. Administrator Wickham replied it was less of an increase last time.

Council member Wylie wondered if it would be cheaper to hire someone in-house. Mayor Rolf mentioned it would be difficult to find someone part-time and for the price.

Mayor Rolf stated he wished the costs could be lower but was in support of the contract. The Council agreed.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL TO APPROVE THE ABDO FINANCIAL SERVICES CONTRACT. SECOND BY BRAY JOHNSON. MOTION CARRIED (5-0).

D. Resolution 24-125 Access Control for Public Works Building

Administrator Wickham mentioned that the proposal is from IPS which is Council member West's business. Council member West added that he would probably donate another camera or other items. He mentioned he would abstain from the vote.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 24-125 APPROVING TO INSTALL ACCESS CONTROL AT PUBLIC WORKS BUILDING. SECOND BY WYLIE. MOTION CARRIED (4-0-1 WEST ABSTAINED).

E. The Ponds Land

Administrator Wickham reported that they are ready to have offers and will bring the proposals back to the Council.

Mayor Rolf asked if it would be the full project or partial project. Administrator Wickham replied that there would be discussions to determine what portions of land the City would like to keep.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL TO DIRECT STAFF TO PREPARE AN RFP FOR THE PONDS LAND. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST. MOTION CARRIED (5-0).

F. Administrator Updates

Administrator Wickham stated the newsletter is being finalized and will be delivered in late November or early December. He thanked all of the election judges and Ms. Pease.

Administrator Wickham mentioned that staff would like to hire a receptionist or customer service representative, and an experienced City Clerk. It is going to be difficult to create a full-time position with the 2025 budget. There is an option to use some of the reserves to pay for a full-time position during 2025 and then budget for the position in 2026. He provided the Council with several options on how the budget could work to hire the positions.

The Council discussed the desire to hire a full-time person instead of a part-time person.

Administrator Wickham stated the Council would discuss cannabis during the next Council meeting.

Administrator Wickham mentioned 21540 Linnet Street NW was sent a notice about potential abatement proceedings and a public hearing. The property owners signed a nuisance abatement today which included an agreement that they would come into compliance by December 15th and a status update by December 1, 2024.

Administrator Wickham mentioned that work session with Rum River Consultants to discuss administrative citations for code enforcement will have to wait until the regular meeting on January 27, 2024.

Administrator Wickham stated he would keep Ms. Pease as Deputy City Clerk and the same wage.

12. MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS/UPDATES

Council member Bray Johnson reminded the community to not park on the street when there is more than one inch of snow. She asked Administrator Wickham to see how long the contract is with the people who do the videos.

Mayor Rolf mentioned Mayor of the Day is coming up and encouraged 4th, 5th, and 6th graders to submit an essay to the League of Minnesota Cities website for a chance to win \$100. He mentioned that for someone living in Oak Grove, he would provide a \$25 gift card, have a chance to get picked up in a fire truck, and call the meeting to order. Essays can be sent to Mayor Rolf or Administrator Wickham by December 13.

Administrator Wickham showed the Council potential features for the new Fire Department station and City Hall. The Council discussed layout options, and a maximum budget.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 25, 2024, at 6:00 PM.

MOTION MADE BY MAYOR ROLF. SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO MINNESOTA STATUTES, SECTION 13D.05, SUBDIVISION 3(a) FOR THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR. MOTION CARRIED (5-0).

THE CITY COUNCIL WENT INTO CLOSED SESSION AT 8:17 PM.

THE REGULAR MEETING RESUMED AT 9:13 PM.

13. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL, SECOND BY MAYOR WEST TO ADJOURN. MOTION CARRIED 5-0. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 9:13 PM.