

MINUTES
City of Niagara
Regular City Council Meeting
Wednesday, September 27, 2023
5:00 P.M.
Niagara City Hall
1029 Roosevelt Road
Niagara, WI 54151

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Mayor Joe Johnston, Present: Alderpersons Lynn Burke, Mike Darne, Dan Decker, Glenn Lantagne, Lisa Johnson, Don Shampo; Administrator/Clerk/Treasurer Audrey Fredrick; Police Chief Angie Moreau; Public Works Coordinator Jim Stachowicz, Police Officer Mike Chapman

Also present: Niagara Water Treatment Operator Dave Dunlap, Marinette County Sheriff Randy Miller, Marinette County District Attorney DeShea Morrow, Niagara Area Emergency Unit Emergency Medical Technician Laura Valley, Teresa Clement

A motion was made by Alderperson Darne to approve the agenda. Alderperson Shampo seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Public Appearances:

Marinette County Sheriff Randy Miller spoke on behalf of the accomplishments made by the current police department; the department is proactive and involved in the community. He noted that the county is divided into three sections for deputy coverage and it is not always possible to have a deputy in the area. Each county deputy covers approximately 400 square miles, and response time can be 30 – 40 minutes, and sometimes not available at all. The deputies that live in the local area are not on duty at the same time and typically do not answer calls while off duty. Sheriff Miller added the current Niagara police force has made a major impact on the hard drug issues in this area. His opinion is that reducing City staffing levels will not support the existing and urgent needs of the community.

Marinette County District Attorney DeShea Morrow reported that there is an increase of narcotics being transported through our area from both the north and south. The Niagara police officers have been involved in a number of high-profile cases including a federal case, dealing with sex offenders, drugs, child abuse, and assaults. The county values the city police department as involved and effective partners.

Niagara Area Emergency Unit Emergency (NAEU) Medical Technician Laura Valley stated the rescue squad counts on the police as a partner; the police are the “true first responders.” Minutes matter during a response, and police provide care until the NAEU arrives. The police department provides safety and secures the scene, which is important in potentially dangerous and violent situations. The police officers interact with the community and their familiar presence comforts the patients, especially the children.

A motion was made by Alderperson Darne and seconded by Alderperson Burke to approve the minutes from the Regular City Council Meeting August 23, 2023. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Alderperson Burke and seconded by Alderperson Darne to pre-approve the bills for October 2023. Motion carried.

The reports were reviewed. Alderperson Darne moved to approve the reports as presented. Alderperson Decker seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Reports from department heads or elected officials:

- Police Chief Moreau:
 - Citations were issued within 24 hours of installing the security cameras at the Riverside Fields parking lot, which covered half the cost of the cameras.
 - Officer candidate Rhianna Carne passed her Phase 2 exam and is reported to be doing exceptionally well at the academy.
 - Officer patrol shifts have been adjusted to address the speeding complaints on the south end of River Street.
- Mayor Johnston:
 - Mass Casualty Training was conducted successfully with area-wide police, fire and rescue personnel.

The replacement of replacing the fourth officer position upon retirement of the Police Chief was discussed. Chief Moreau presented letters from Marinette County Patrol Lieutenant William Swanson, Niagara School Superintendent Nathaniel Burkland and Caring House Executive Director Cheryl O'Neil stating their favorable opinion of the necessity of keeping the position. Chief Moreau then addressed the Council noting recent events which she felt justified four full-time officers: high and low speed chases, foot chases, drug arrests, search warrants, sexual assaults, domestic violence, suicidal people with guns, child abuse and neglect, warrants and arrests. She noted the City will be receiving an additional \$123,000.00 per year to be distributed between public works and public safety. Chief Moreau added that the community is growing with 44 new apartment units and additional businesses. She stated the officers are productive, well educated and dedicated, and she expressed her concern that the City could lose the existing talent they have due to job insecurity from a reduction in staffing; this would be a disservice to the community. Comments from elected officials:

Mayor Johnston: expressed that he is very satisfied with the Police Department but is concerned about funding infrastructure needs. He would like to allocate the funds for the fourth officer to future infrastructure projects.

Aldersperson Shampo: the current Police Department is the best and most effective that the City has ever had, a fourth officer is necessary.

Aldersperson Decker: in order to attract and retain new families and businesses, a solid Police Department of four officers is needed.

Aldersperson Lantagne: the quality of the current police force is excellent, but the City can manage on three officers after the Chief retires.

Aldersperson Burke: if the City reduces the police force to three members, the fourth will never be replaced. It is critical that we maintain four officers.

Other comments from City representatives:

Public Works Coordinator Stachowicz: it is difficult for the street crew when the department isn't staffed during snow storms or safety and weather incidents. Reducing the Police Department would add a safety burden.

Officer Chapman: the police department swore to protect the citizens. Serious and violent crime is increasing. It has been challenging with a four-person department; a reduction would be detrimental to the community.

A motion was made by Aldersperson Decker to replace the fourth police officer after the retirement of the chief, retaining the staffing at four. Aldersperson Darne seconded the motion. A roll call vote was called by Mayor Johnston, with Alderspersons Burke, Darne, Decker, Johnson and Shampo voting "AYE" and Aldersperson Lantagne voting "NAY". Motion carried on a vote of 5 to 1.

A motion was made by Alderman Decker to approve a \$250,000.00 line of credit for five years amortization upon the draw date with Stephenson National Bank & Trust. Aldersperson Shampo seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Alderson Decker moved to replace the office copier/scanner/fax machine for \$5,000.00 based on a quote from Orbit Technology, with the current machine going to the Public Works garage. Alderson Burke seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Alderson Decker moved to extend the accessor contract to Jerry Pillath from 2024 through 2027. Alderson Darne seconded the motion. Motion carried.

A quote was received from Brooks Electric to replace the lights at the Heights Park ball field for \$113,000.00 plus \$40,000.00 for installation. Public Works Coordinator Stachowicz noted the porcelain insulators and wires are disintegrated. Alderson Shampo moved to look at other lighting options and take no action at this time. Alderson Burke seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Administrator Fredrick reported The Sandlot will not create an ice skating rink if the City has plans to do the same. Alderson Shampo moved to not have the City fill a rink, as this would be a conflict to the business; this will allow the The Sandlot to move forward with their plans. Alderson Burke seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Alderson Shampo moved to set Monday, October 16 at 5:00 p.m. as date to discuss the budget. No action will be taken at this meeting. Alderson Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

A motion was made Alderson Burke to issue temporary operator licenses for the Wine Walk on October 8, 2023 in the City limits to Mike Weber, Patricia Zenko, Bill Schintgen and Sharon Stone. Alderson Shampo seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Alderson Decker moved to approve an operator license to Paula McDowell. Alderson Burke seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Administrator Report - Audrey Fredrick

- The grant process has begun for the water tower project, as well as a secondary road and infrastructure improvement application.
- There will be a “listening session” with Senator Mary Felzkowski and Representative Jeff Mursau at City Hall on Monday, October 2 from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Public Works, Water and Sewer Report – Jim Stachowicz and Dave Dunlap

- One of the new generators had issues with the valve seal; this is being replaced under warranty.
- The radio control for the water system is obsolete.
- The annual sludge haul is complete.
- Another load of chemicals for water treatment is needed.
- Water valves are being exercised, 178 have been completed to date.
- Winter sand will be hauled by the City crew.
- Trees were cut at along Tyler Road across from the shop and at the softball field at Riverside Park.
- Looking at possibility of utilizing product from Specialty Granules, Inc. on the winter roads for \$3.00 per ton.
- Stones were leveled at the cemetery.

Committee Reports:

- Beautification – Lynn Burke

- Fall decorations were placed.
- The farmer and vendor market was a successful promotion for the City.
- Parks – Alderperson Shampo
 - The parks look well maintained.
- Finance – Alderperson Decker
 - Financial reports have been reviewed and look good.

Alderperson Burke moved to set the next meeting date as Wednesday, October 18, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. This date is the third Wednesday of the month to accommodate a scheduling conflict. Alderperson Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Alderperson Darne and seconded by Alderperson Lantagne to adjourn. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:28 p.m.