

MINUTES
City of Niagara
Regular City Council Meeting
Wednesday, October 16, 2024
Niagara City Hall
1029 Roosevelt Road
Niagara, WI 54151

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Mayor Joseph Johnston. Present: Alderpersons Lynn Burke, Michael Darne, Daniel Decker, Lisa Johnson, Glenn Lantagne and Don Shampo; Police Chief Mike Chapman, Administrator/Clerk/Treasurer Audrey Fredrick, Public Works Coordinator Jim Stachowicz, Treatment Plant Operator Dave Dunlap

Also present: Steve Coron of GFL, DeShea Morrow

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

Public Comments: DeShea Morrow, Marinette County District Attorney, introduced herself and announced her intention to run for election for the judicial position in April 2025.

A motion was made by Alderperson Darne and seconded by Alderperson Shampo to approve the minutes from the September 26, 2024 meeting. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Alderperson Burke and seconded by Alderperson Shampo to pre-approve the bills for November 2024. Motion carried.

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

Reports from department heads or elected officials:

- Mayor Johnston
 - The M.J. Electric project construction will keep moving forward until the weather conditions halt progress.
- Police Chief Chapman
 - Reimbursement was received for recent training attended by Officer Carne.
 - Officer Seth Davis is getting excellent reviews from the police academy instructors; he will graduate in three weeks.

Administrator Fredrick gave an update on the tank recoating project. The announcement of loan principal forgiveness awards has not yet been announced by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. It is expected by the end of October. The water tower project will be awarded to the qualified low bidder in November. A letter and income survey will be sent by Cedar Corporation to all city residents in an effort to get an accurate representation of the city's income status. Retaining "low-to-moderate income" designation qualifies the city for additional grant funding. A motion was made by Alderperson Decker to acknowledge the report. Alderperson Darne seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The bid for solid waste and recycling from GFL was reviewed. Administrator Fredrick affirmed that requests for proposals were submitted to three companies, and confirmations were received from Waste Management and GFL. The only company to submit a bid was the current service provider, GFL. The proposed amount is \$20.54 per residential cart per month. A benefit of a fixed fee will allow the city to accurately budget for disposal costs instead of estimating the amount.

A motion was made by Alderperson Shampo accept the proposal for a five-year contract. Alderperson Lantagne seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, with all voting “AYE.” Motion carried.

Administrator Fredrick discussed the rising costs of health insurance, with 2025 costs increasing 14 percent. Employees are limited to medical plans offered through Wisconsin’s Employee Trust Fund (ETF) program. With the exception of the current “Access Plan”, which is very expensive, the closest available providers and hospitals on the plans for municipal employees based in Marinette County are located in the City of Marinette. Private (non-ETF) insurance companies will only cover current employees, and not the retirees that were grandfathered into insurance coverage – noting that no current employees have retirement health benefits. ETF does provide the “State Maintenance Plan”, which can be used for many providers based in Dickinson and Iron County only, unless there is an emergency or if the service is not available locally. The services covered under this plan are similar to what is currently offered. Converting to the State Maintenance Plan will save the city over \$70,000.00 annually. In addition, an incentive of \$4,000 annually to the full-time eligible employees who do not take the health insurance benefits will be offered (currently, two employees.) Alderperson Burke moved to approve this decision. Alderperson Decker seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, with all voting “AYE.” Motion carried.

Employee compensation was discussed. Police Chief Chapman presented a wage survey of rural departments of similar size; the City of Niagara was the lowest paid department. Discussion followed regarding the current compensation of all city departments. In an effort to remain competitive and to retain employees, a rate increase was proposed. This increase would be covered by the health insurance savings. Fire department per-call wages were also discussed as they have not been increased since 2010. A motion was made by Alderperson Decker to increase wages for eligible employees by 9 percent and fire department per-call wages from \$12.00 per call to \$15.00 per call. Alderperson Burke seconded the motion. The motion was rescinded and amended by Alderperson Decker, with a second on the motion by Alderperson Burke, to an increase of 7.5 percent for all eligible employees and fire department per-call wages from \$12.00 to \$15.00 per call. This will make wages closer to comparable local amounts. The fire department increase is contingent on an approval from the Town of Niagara, as they share 50 percent of the costs. Council members will receive an increase of \$20.00 per regular meeting. This will go into effect after the April 2025 reorganizational meeting, and is only applicable to the holders of the seats up for election in 2025, with the other seats effective in 2026, per state statute 66.0505. A roll call vote was taken, with all voting “AYE.” Motion carried.

Administrator Report - Audrey Fredrick

- Due to the expectation of high voter turnout, 100 additional ballots were ordered for the November 5 election.
- The high school social studies students participated in a mock election at City Hall to learn about the election and tabulation process.
- Auditor Scott Sternhagen will be contacted to review the proposed budget.
- Met with City Engineer Thad Majkowski to prioritize future projects for funding purposes, including the Hill and Forest Street project.

Public Works Report– Jim Stachowicz

- The water in the parks has been shut off for the season.
- 117 tons of winter salt was delivered.
- The lead line inventory was submitted to the DNR.
- Fall sewer cleaning is underway.

Water and Sewer Utility Report – Dave Dunlap

- The sanitary survey deficiencies were cleared.
- Routine maintenance on the water and sewer systems.

Committee Reports:

- Beautification – Lynn Burke
 - A fundraising bake sale will be held at Nicolet National Bank on October 18.
- Parks – Alderperson Shampo
 - Complimented the Public Works crew on the culvert project on Ridge Street.
 - Park gates should be locked for the winter.
 - Boat lifts can be removed.
- Finance – Alderperson Decker
 - The financial reports have been reviewed with all in good order.

Alderperson Johnson moved to set the next meeting date for the Budget Hearing at 5:15 p.m. Thursday November 21, 2024, with the regular meeting to follow. The change is due to the Thanksgiving holiday. Alderperson Burke seconded the motion. Motion carried.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.