

The Common Council met at City Hall in the City of Black River Falls on April 16, 2024 at 6:41 P.M. Alderpersons Dougherty, Gearing-Lancaster, Wussow, Ammann, M. Rave and E. Rave were present. Alderpersons Olson attended remotely via Zoom meetings. Mayor J. Eddy presided.

Alderson Olson nominated Alderson Gearing-Lancaster for Council President. Alderson E. Rave nominated Alderson M. Rave for Council President. There were no other nominations.

It was moved by Alderson Wussow, seconded by Alderson Ammann to close nominations. Motion carried.

Council members voted for Council President by written ballot. Alderson M. Rave received 4 votes and Alderson Gearing-Lancaster received 3 votes. Alderson M. Rave was elected Council President by majority vote.

It was moved by Alderson Ammann, seconded by Alderson Dougherty to designate Security Financial Bank, Black River Country Bank, Co-op Credit Union, Waumandee State Bank, and BNY Mellon/Pershing as official depositories for the City of Black River Falls. Motion carried.

Mayor Eddy advised there were still positions to fill by appointment on the Business Improvement District (BID) Board, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the City Housing Authority. Those appointments will be brought to the Council for approval once members have confirmed their desire to serve on those committees.

It was moved by Alderson M. Rave, seconded by Alderson Gearing-Lancaster to approve the Mayor's Appointments for 2024-2025 as presented. Motion carried.

It was moved by Alderson Dougherty, seconded by Alderson Wussow to designate the Banner Journal as the official publication for the City of Black River Falls. Motion carried.

There was lengthy discussion on the shared-ride taxi service and the financial challenges moving forward that included a projected \$141,883.94 deficit for 2024; the need to order a new van if the service is to continue; there have been discussions with Jackson County and Health and Human Services but there aren't other grant opportunities for them to offset the deficit we are facing; reached out to the Ho-Chunk Nation but unable to meet yet but the number of tribal members that are served by the taxi service is not significant; what hurt ridership was a three month shut down and raising fares; projecting a maximum of 25,000 annual rides; contract ends this year so City needs to decide whether they want to exercise an option year to continue for one more year; the deficit is going to continue to increase with stagnant revenues and ever increasing expenses; it's a valuable service for the elderly, disabled, and those needing transportation to and from work and medical appointments; the County has a mini bus but that operates on a limited schedule and there are preferences for ridership; anybody can come in and operate a taxi service – including Uber and Lyft - without any licensing or permitting; the fee for private taxi service would be much higher; several other municipalities across the state are having the same struggle; City Administrator looking for direction and can reach out to DOT for guidance on how to move forward which would include at least one public hearing; there are no penalties for not using the awarded federal grant to purchase a replacement van; the only way to fund anything that is in a deficit in the city is to take from the capital budget, but we are just catching up on our streets and equipment and have a good capital improvement plan in place moving forward; EMS will have to be placed on the tax roll soon which will be \$150,000 to \$160,000 a year to keep that service in place; we are positioned to handle future capital needs without raising taxes; there was discussion on what the fare rate would need to be in order to cover the deficit and how additional fare increases may affect ridership; maybe someone could come up with a way to do this in the private sector and start a system in the City that works well; consider looking at a third party company to complete a study to see where we are seeing the decline, why, what rates would need to be charged to make it work, and if not sustainable then develop an exit strategy and plan.

It was moved by Alderson Olson, seconded by Alderson Wussow to adjourn. Motion carried at 7:17pm.

A. Brad Chown
City Administrator