

The Common Council met in special session at City Hall in the City of Black River Falls on July 17, 2024 at 6:00 P.M. Alderpersons Gearing-Lancaster, Wussow, Peloquin, M. Rave and Dougherty were present. Alderpersons Ammann, E. Rave, and Olson were excused. Mayor J. Eddy presided.

Mayor Eddy announced to those in attendance that the Council did not have quorum. All action items will be placed on the agenda for the next Common Council meeting.

There were six citizens in attendance – 4 in person and 2 remotely via Zoom meetings.

The City Administrator advised he received an email update on the Jackson County Jail Project that stated the Law Enforcement Committee received a final report from the Samuels Group/Venture Architects on June 20th. The recommended site from the Samuels/Venture group was the DHHS campus concept for a Jail only at an estimated cost of \$40 million. At this point, it is believed the LEC and Property Committee are not interested in moving a “new build” forward, and the Property Committee is now looking at a remodel of the present 1986 Jail.

The Department Head monthly reports were reviewed. Department heads present were Darryl Nelson, Jarod Meyer, Jody Stoker, Travis Brown, Cara Hart, and Brad Chown.

The Parks & Recreation Director advised there were over 300 visitors to the Aquatic Center opening weekend and they have seen as many as 360 on a single day.

The Fire Chief, City Administrator, and Mayor presented on EMS funding and the need to begin charging all municipalities a fee for the service. The need ranges from \$25 to \$45 per capita. \$25 per capita would staff one ambulance at the paramedic level 24/7/365. \$45 per capita would staff two ambulances at the paramedic level 24/7/365 and would maximize transfer revenue. Interfacility transfers are important to all EMS services as 911 calls alone do not generate enough revenue to cover the costs. There have been two well attended informational meetings that the other 22 municipalities were invited to. Feedback was that some are not willing to pay anything for the service while others may agree to \$10-\$20 per capita. Data related to reimbursement rates not keeping up with the increasing cost of operating the service were presented. BRF EMS has been providing this service to 23 municipalities at no charge for over 50 years, but with the decrease in transfer volume, low reimbursement rates from Medicare and Medicaid, and increase in cost of doing business, the service can no longer operate on user fees alone. Data from audited financials was shared that illustrated an operating loss 4 out of the past 5 years and a trend of increasing operating losses with a 2023 operating loss of over \$111,000. The proposal will be to include language in the contracts that explain the fee will be set by the Common Council, and the recommended fee for 2025 is \$25 per capita. The City would also be required to pay the fee which would equate to \$90,550 at \$25 per capita. The state legislature adopted 2023 Wisconsin Act 12 which provided Supplemental County & Municipal Aid to all municipalities in 2024. State fire and EMS organizations lobbied heavily for this legislation to fund fire and EMS services. Last minute changes to the legislation allowed municipalities to use the funds for public works, courts, and/or transportation so most municipalities, including the City, used these funds in 2024 budgets for projects other than fire and EMS. All municipalities now have to submit an annual Maintenance of Effort certification to the state illustrating that they did not reduce fire or EMS staffing or funding in order to continue to receive that supplemental shared revenue. If any municipality fails to maintain staffing or funding levels, then they are subject to losing 15% of their shared revenue payments from the state. Municipalities would need to allocate 12% to 79% of their new supplemental shared revenue to cover the \$25 per capita EMS fee in 2025. The City would be the highest at 79% while the average would be 30%. All municipalities are currently under contract with BRF EMS for EMS services at no charge. We will need to draft new contracts to include an annual fee and present them to each municipality for consideration. They are not obligated to sign with BRF EMS. They could look to other local EMS providers, but we are all required by statute to provide EMS service to our constituents. This is a state and national issue not just a local one. This will be brought back to the August 6th Common Council meeting for possible action as municipalities will need to know soon for budgeting purposes.

The Street Superintendent advised the Buchanon Street project is going out to bid and should have those on the agenda for the August 6th Common Council meeting for approval. Municipal Utilities is still working with the DNR for water main permit, and if that takes too long, we may need to delay the project until next year.

Mayor Eddy adjourned the meeting at 6:57pm.

A. Brad Chown, City Administrator