

Holdingford City Council Minutes and Public Hearing Minutes

Monday, February 10th, 2025.

Council Members in attendance: Jayme Opatz, Tim Winter, Travis Harlander.

Others in attendance: Nicky Lahr, Herman Lensing, Karla and Tom Kalla, Jenny Gunderson, Steve Horvath, Bryon Kester, Eric Kohorst, Bruce Gerads, Brent Gerads, Carlena Johnson, Angel Becker, Josh Becker, Jacob Becker, Adam Achmann.

Travis opened the public hearing for discussion on allowing backyard chickens within the city limits, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Travis asked for input on the pros and cons of allowing backyard chickens at residences within the city limits of Holdingford. Jenny Gunderson and Eric Kohorst presented a plan to include some of the following: creating an Urban Chicken Committee to manage compliance with regulations to reduce city staff involvement; creating a permit system in which the city will collect a yearly fee, helping to identify who has backyard flocks; limiting flock size to 12 hens, with no roosters; keeping chickens confined in a house or coop that must be kept clean, with waste and bedding disposed of in a responsible manner (city staff stated that it could be brought to the city compost site); and ensuring that runs have fencing on all sides, including a roof. Chicken coops/runs would not be included in the accessory building count per city ordinance. Councilmember Opatz explained that he didn't think many people are against chickens but the issue is more about policing the ordinance without utilizing more staff time. Tim mentioned that other cities had similar policies to the items presented. Jayme recommended that all the information should be compiled, and Nicky and the city attorney would draft the language for approval at the next city council meeting. Karla Kalla stated that she is in favor of chickens in the city. No other input was given.

Travis closed the public hearing, and opened the City Council meeting at 7:12pm.

Josh and Jacob Becker, along with Carlena Johnson, presented a service project they are proposing for the city. Josh requested to install approximately 10 bat houses to help preserve the bat species and keep them out of residents' homes. Tim asked where they would like to install them and reminded them that a full plan needs to be provided. After some discussion, Jayme made a motion to approve the City Project request, contingent on them working directly with Maintenance Supervisor Steve Horvath to determine appropriate locations. Travis seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Brent Gerads was present with Bruce Gerads to petition a reduction of his water bill. They stated that his latest utility bill was excessive, approximately \$1,600, due to a faulty water softener. They requested forgiveness of the sewer portion. Bruce stated that they were told that because the water was treated and the wastewater also had to be treated, city policy states that there will not be forgiveness. Bruce stated that he felt the policy should not be in place and that the water sent to the wastewater plant actually helps the treatment via dilution. He also mentioned that he was disappointed the city does not monitor household usage on a regular basis, as his research showed that other cities have that ability. Staff explained that the only way to monitor usage is when manual reads are done monthly. It was also explained that if a resident would like to purchase a cellular endpoint for their meter, they would be able to monitor their own usage daily; however, the city would still not have the ability to monitor it daily on the resident's behalf. Jayme said the city would be able to facilitate a repayment plan, and Brent would not be charged late fees as long as the plan was upheld. Brent said he would come in and make those arrangements.

Jayme made a motion to approve the consent agenda, including January council minutes and financials. Tim seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Travis read the City Engineer report for Dave Blommel. He reported that bids are now being accepted for the pavement projects at North High Court and the City Hall parking lot. The bids will be opened in early March and brought to the March 10th meeting for approval.

Steve Horvath gave the Maintenance report. He said that the two repaired mixers were back from repair. One was installed but not working. He is working with Newterra for a solution to get it replaced under warranty. He replaced one of the blower pack compressors at the WWTP. They have been staying busy with the snow events and had to do repairs to the loader and the skid steer.

Nicky gave the Clerk's report. She is reviewing accounting entries in preparation for the 2024 audit and purging old files. She is working on township billing for fire services, completed the report of outstanding indebtedness, and PERA exemption reporting. She paid the annual GO bond payment of \$62,581 and submitted final 2025 budgets to the state. She also stated that the clerk computers were replaced with laptops and docking stations and the hardware is in place for the new SCADA computer. She is continuing to work with Shift Technologies to implement an offsite data storage plan.

Tim made a motion to remove Kelly Abfalter from the Magnifi Credit Union account and add Travis Harlander to it. Jayme seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

The local board of appeal and equalization will be in Holdingford on April 1st at 6:00 p.m. to address any disputes with the county tax valuations on properties. It was presented that the County would take over these meetings in the future; however, the council chose to continue to hold the meetings locally.

City Hall will be closed from February 14th-18th. The next meeting will take place on March 10th.

Notices were sent for past-due water bills to Walker Nienaber, Dale Lundberg, Roger Jensen, Kevin Feia, Joseph and Lana Doll, Shannon Dalcin, Shannon Backlund, and Covered Bridge.

Jayme made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Tim seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Signed:

Nicky Lahr *Nicky Lahr*

City Clerk-Treasurer, Holdingford