

Holdingsford City Council Minutes and Public Hearing Minutes Monday, March 10th, 2025.

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

Others in attendance: Nicky Lahr, Karla Kalla, Jenny Gunderson, Steve Horvath, Bryon Keser, Dave Blommel, Sharon Berscheid, Diane Konsor, Tim Berscheid, Eric Berscheid, Aaron Rudolph, Melvin Breth, Keith Hommerding.

Travis called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and the pledge of allegiance was recited.

Jayme made a motion to approve the consent agenda, including February Council minutes and financials. Seth seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Travis stated that Council Member Andy Higgins had submitted a letter of resignation from his Council seat. Jayme made a motion to approve resolution 2025-10-3-4 declaring the council vacancy. Tim seconded the motion. Travis stated that the Council would appoint someone into the vacant position at the April 14th meeting. The motion passed with all in favor. Eric Berscheid mentioned that he would be interested in filling the vacancy.

City Engineer Dave Blommel shared the bid amounts that were received for the North High Court project as well as the City Hall parking lot. His recommendation was to go with the lowest bid, Omann Brothers Paving Inc of Albertville, MN. There was discussion on the retaining wall owned by WM. D. Scepaniak. It was noted that this would need to be repaired or replaced before paving takes place. Nicky will communicate this to them. Eric Berscheid also recommended looking into a different option alongside the back of City hall (cement or gravel), and the Council agreed, as this could save money. Jayme made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-3-10-5 accepting the bid from Omann Brothers Paving for North High Court, and for City Hall's parking lot. Tim seconded the motion and it passed with all in favor.

Keith gave a Fire Department update on calls they received for the year (33). He also stated that the breakfast they served had a record turnout, and thanked the community for supporting them.

Steve Horvath gave the Maintenance report. He reported that they are bringing the bad mixer back for warranty work. They are working with the MDH on optimal corrosion control treatment, and attended the MRWA conference for continuing ed credits. He also said that they will need to find more homes to test for copper and lead as they need to test 20 homes twice a year again.

Travis read the HMLS report. They are approximately -\$2k for the year which is normal for this time of year. She attributes this to a large liquor purchase and low snowmobile traffic this year. Bands are booked for March, April and July. And they are looking into the possibility of another dart tournament. The annual health inspection occurred with no issues to report.

Nicky gave the Clerk's report. She is busy prepping for early April Audit. She stated that the property/casual insurance and work comp coverage premiums will be due in the next month. She is planning for spring conference and vacation which will cause some City Hall closures which will be posted on the doors at City Hall, on the website and on the City's Facebook page. Nicky also explained that the prosecution against Jared Hillesheim, who was involved in theft and gambling violations from the Municipal Liquor Store, has wrapped up. He took a plea bargain, and was given a stayed sentence. If he manages his parole for 5 years, his charges will be dropped to a petty misdemeanor. If he does not follow the terms of his parole, he will have 10 months and 1 day of jail time, and a felony charge. Jared will pay restitution to the City for money stolen from the Municipal liquor store.

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In old business, the new owner of Holdingford Hillside Trailer park was invited to appear at this council meeting to discuss his plans for improvements. The Clerk received an email on Monday morning from his attorney stating that the email is in lieu of a personal appearance. The letter describes some of the challenges Mr. Anderson faced when attempting to purchase Hillside Trailer Park, and also explains that improvements will be made as resources become available. The letter continues to state that the City should refrain from attempting to enforce city ordinances that have passed since the Trailer Park was originally put in place, and asked that the city does not micromanage the layout and setback of homes with the park due to grandfather of existing rules. (The full letter can be found in the March 2025 agenda packet.) Jayme stated that he would still like to have a conversation between the Council and Mr. Andersen to open lines of communications, as it was the initial intent. Travis mentioned getting all pertinent laws and ordinances gathered before the conversation. Travis also stated that he does not feel that anything can be grandfathered after a sale or major changes have taken place. Nicky stated that she has spoken with Greg Koshiol, Stearns County Health Inspector and also Dave Anderson, City Attorney in regards to how the City can apply zoning, ordinance, and permits to the property. Overall, it was noted that the park is now moving in the right directions and improvements have been noticed.

Travis brought forward a Chicken ordinance that was drafted by the city attorney based off of his experience with this topic along with recommendations from city residents Jenny Gunderson, and Eric Kohorst. Tim and Sharon Berscheid, Eric Berscheid, and Diane Konsor discussed details of the draft including the number of chickens, the size of the coops, who would monitor to ensure the ordinance is followed, and other various items, and shared their concerns. Travis and Jayme both stated that they would like time to research the topic further and that it would be tabled until the next meeting. Jenny asked if there would be a final decision at the next meeting and what she should do to prepare for the meeting. Jayme recommended that she be present to answer further questions, but he was not sure if there would be a final vote in April.

In new business, a citizen requested information on the alley located between 110 and 130 Washington Street, and who is responsible for upkeep. It was explained that the alley is indeed City owned, however the City no longer maintains it. They do not intend to close the alley at this time.

Helping hands requested a gambling permit to host Bingo during Holdingford Daze. Jayme made a motion to pass resolution 25-3-10-1 approving the permit. Seth seconded it and it passed with all in favor.

FFA requested a gambling permit for a raffle to be held on October 20, 2025. Seth made a motion to approve resolution 25-3-10-2 and Tim seconded it. Motion passed with all in favor.

A thank you was given to the Holdingford Lioness for donating a new coffee maker to the City to be used at the Helping Hands meals on Tuesdays.

The City-Wide Cleanup is scheduled for May 17th. A motion was made by Jayme to approve the same fee schedule as the prior year, as well as changing the hours to 8:00 am to 11:00 am. Tim seconded the motion and it passed with all in favor. Seth also agreed to check with the High School to see if the event could be moved to their parking lot as a safer location. Once the information has been determined, Nicky will release flyers notifying the residents of the changes.

Sharon Berscheid asked the City to address how citizens are notified about public hearings as some do not get the newspaper, have social media, or check the website. Jayme stated that the hearings are published in the Star Post, and posted at City Hall as statute dictates. She recommended posting hearing notices at the Holdingford Post office as well as putting the notice in with utility bills. Nicky agreed that those are reasonable. Jayme said we would do as much as we can to communicate to everyone.

Eric Berscheid recommended that public hearings don't happen before an actual draft of an ordinance is written. Jayme stated that the public hearing happened first to ensure there was enough support to justify putting work into drafting an ordinance. Eric recommended having two separate public hearings in those cases.

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Mayor Harlander reported that effective immediately, he will be holding open office hours at City Hall on Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8:30pm. Residents are encouraged to come in to discuss any concerns or recommendations for the City. He also discussed seeking various grants for the city, including the repair of some of the retaining walls in town.

Karla Kalla asked that Liquor Store employees don't park directly in front of the HMLS door as there are elderly patrons that could use that spot. She also asked if the thistle on Berscheid's property be managed better, and the fields cut on a regular basis. Eric agreed to spray for the thistle, and Tim explained that it is agricultural land and it needs to be long enough before cutting.

Looking forward: The local board of appeal and equalization will be in Holdingford on April 1st at 6:00 p.m. City Hall will be closed March 27th, April 25th, 28th and 29th.

Notices were sent for past-due water bills to Brookly McGillivray, Nathaniel Posch, Robert Keil, Roger Jensen, Kevin Feia, Joseph and Lana Doll, Shannon Dalcin, Shannon Backlund, and Covered Bridge.

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

Signed:

Nicky Lahr _____

City Clerk-Treasurer, Holdingford