Alden City Council

Special Meeting

January 27th, 2025

5:00 PM

Mayor Mourlam called the special meeting and budget work session to order at 5:00PM. All council members were present, and the following City Departments were represented: Brandon Gehrke, Fire Chief, Lisa Liittschwager, Library Director, Andy Jass and Steve Lyon, Public Works and City Clerk Lorrie Watts. Also in attendance were Justin Ites of the Times Citizen, Mark Buschkamp of the IFADC, Joe Lyon, William Peters.

Consent Agenda: Jerry Hartema moved to approve, Mark Oliver seconded and all present voted aye.

Schiller Grant: Janaan Harding reported that she is working on grants for the Schiller Foundation consisting of an addition to the seating area around the baby pool that would allow patrons to have room to spread, catch some shade and possibly have bean bag toss boards. The fence around that area would be moved back, concrete would be added, and a slanted metal roof would be added to create the shaded area. This would remove some grassy areas, for less mowing and create greater deck space. She explained this would be funneled through the Horizon Group and she has their blessing to move forward. She would like the council’s blessing because it is on City property. Discussion was had about Alliant Energy electric and gas lines to the heater house and a water line that runs in that area. Andy Jass stated he thought that could be worked around with some changes. The water line could be straightened out to accommodate the project. Alliant would be involved so all regulations and rules could be followed. Mark Oliver motioned to approve the project, Jerry Hartema seconded the motion and all present voted aye. Harding stated that the Schiller Tree has been carved into a Squirrel and the project was donated by Marlys Thomas. There are two trees that are set to be in honor of Evelyn and Eleanor Schiller and all they have done for the community of Alden and for all the years to come. Janaan would like some input on the tree that has two sections. She discussed a corn stock. Bob Hoversten stated they loved cardinals. Janaan Harding would talk to Gary Keenan about those two options. She said there are two trees by the swing sets and is hoping there will be some donations to complete the final two. Bob Hoversten motioned to approve the Schiller Honorary trees, Mark Oliver seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Meeting Times: Mark Oliver requested that the city change the regular meeting times to 5:00PM. Bob Hoversten stated that everyone on the council except Mark are self-employed and people can make this work. Mark Oliver motioned to approve; Jerry Hartema seconded the motion all present voted aye. Lorrie Watts stated that this is part of the City’s Ordinance book and would need to be changed by the amendment process. She stated that March would possibly be the earliest this change could take place.

Budget Work Session:

Police Budget: $18700.00, Hoversten moved, Hartema seconded and all present voted aye.

Fire Department: $69956.00 Brandon Gehrke, Fire Chief stated that the department has no big expenditures planned. He stated that they will be applying for grants for some air packs and new bunker gear for the two new members. He stated radio communication is an issue county wide, but the EMA Group is working to resolve this issue through grants, the Hardin County Supervisors and the State. Hoversten moved to approve, Mark Oliver seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Public Safety Budget Total: $88656.00 Hoversten moved, Hartema seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Public Works:

Streets: $178668.00 Hartema moved to approve, Hoversten seconded, all present voted aye. Andy reported there is a row of dead trees that will be taken down. Bud Claude has one on the right-of-way and there is one in the right of way at Fred Elling’s property. There is a vehicle on the way at the Elling address that needs to be moved/towed. Andy Jass stated he would contact Fred regarding the vehicle which is inoperable. Lorrie Watts stated she would send a letter.

Garbage Collection/Landfill Assessment: $84561.00 Watts stated the garbage collection is under contract with no change and the landfill Assessment is remaining the same based on her conversation with the Hardin County Landfill Director. Hartema moved to approve, Mark Oliver seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Total Public Works: $263229.00 Mark Oliver moved to approve, Hartema seconded and all present voted aye.

Health/Social Services: $10426.00

Mosquito Control: $4335.00 Hoversten moved to approve, Hartema seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Food Pantry: $6091.00 Harding moved to approve, Mike Oliver seconded and all present voted aye.

Library Total: $145950.00 Lisa Liittschwager reported that all repairs from the July storm have been completed. She stated the library board approved a 5% increase for employees. She reported she is doing a Schiller Grant to replace the Fire Alarm System at the library. The system’s parts are no longer available. She had John Zoske/Zoske Electric provide input and direction on the system. She currently has 3 bids. The system is probably going to cost upwards of $17000.00. Hoversten motioned to approve, Harding seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Parks Total: $700051.00 Mark Oliver moved to approve, Hoversten seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Pool Total: $90340.00 Hoversten moved to approve, Mark Oliver seconded the motion and all present voted aye

Community Center $26855.00 Hartema moved to approve, Mark Oliver seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Other Culture & Rec Total: $300.00 (Prom) Hoversten moved to approve, Mark Oliver seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Mayor & Council Total: $4465.00 Mark Oliver moved to approve, Hartema seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Clerk Total: $51046.00 Hartema moved to approve, Mark Oliver seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Policy & Administration Total: $900.00 Mark Oliver moved to approve, Hartema seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Elections: $1100.00 Hoversten moved to approve, Hartema seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Legal Services & Attorney: $10000.00, Hartema moved to approve, Mark Oliver seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

City Hall & General Buildings: $14553.00 Mark Oliver moved to approve, Hartema seconded and all present voted aye.

General Government Total: $80264.00 Mark Oliver moved to approve, Hartema seconded the motion and all present vote aye.

Debt Service General Obligation Bond Totals: $53565.00 Mark Oliver moved to approve, Hartema seconded the motion and all present voted aye. Watts explained the time frame on the outstanding bond issues and stated in the next few years the City will have some of them dropping off the tax rolls just in time to take on the bridge and dam project obligations.

Capitol Projects: $25000.00 (Engineering payment to Hardin County) Hartema moved to approve, Harding seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Water Total: (Water, Plant Operation, Plant Maintenance, Water Distribution) $172426.00 Hoversten moved to approve, Hartema seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Sewer Total: $114205.00 Mark Oliver moved to approve, Hartema seconded the motion and all present voted aye.

Transfers: $225373.00 Hartema moved to approve, Mike Oliver seconded and all present voted aye.

Total Expenditures: $1370440.00

Bob Hoversten stated that he wanted to discuss employee pay increases. He stated that the employees absorbed the insurance increase and that the City should help them on that part. 5% was discussed and Mark Oliver moved to give full-time employees and 8%, Mike Oliver seconded the motion, Mayor Mourlam stated that it needs to be an agenda item. Hoversten stated the budget is the time to discuss this issue. Lorrie Watts stated that she would have to put the employees’ wages and hourly increase into the minutes of the next meeting with an 8% increase. She stated that is required. She would have that ready at the February meeting for publication. Mayor Mourlam took the vote: Bob Hoversten, Jerry Hartema, Mike Oliver, Janaan Harding and Mark Oliver approved the 8% increase. Lisa Liittschwager would take the increase to her board to reapprove her increase.

Public Input: Janaan Harding stated the Alden Days Fundraiser is Saturday, February 1st, starting at 5:00PM. She stated there are a lot of nice items. Mayor Mourlam called for motion to adjourn: Mark Oliver moved to adjourn the meeting, Mike Oliver seconded and all present voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 5:39PM.

 Signed: Harley Mourlam, Mayor

ATTEST:

Lorrie Watts, City Clerk