

**REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

**December 26, 2023**

The Regular City Council meeting was called to order by Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin in the Council Chambers at City Hall at 7:00 p.m.

**Roll Call:**

Present: Mallory (arrived at 7:37pm), Mills, Dodd, Kwiatkowski, Darling and Bedwin.

Absent: Raab

**Public Comments on Agenda Items Only:**

- Ray Lofgren asked regarding the unpaid bills and disbursement for Maguire Iron.
- City Manager Sabolsky and Interim Treasurer Clear responded.

**Approval of Agenda and Receive and File all Communications:**

- Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin mentioned an agenda addition. Mark Bronson would like to give an update on the Housing Commission.
- Councilwoman Mills moved to approve the agenda to include a presentation by Commissioner Bronson and to receive and file all communications. Seconded by Councilwoman Darling. Motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:**

- Councilman Kwiatkowski moved to approve the Regular City Council meeting minutes of December 12, 2023, as presented. Seconded by Councilwoman Dodd. Motion carried unanimously.

**Bills and Disbursements:**

- Prepaid Bills and Disbursements for the Month of December 2023.
  - Councilwoman Mills moved to approve the prepaid bills and disbursements for the month of December 2023 in the amount of \$3,441,515.49. Seconded by Councilwoman Darling.
  - Councilwoman Dodd asked regarding the October petty cash. Councilman Kwiatkowski asked regarding the payments to J&N Construction.
  - Clear answered Council's questions regarding those prepaid bills and disbursements.
  - A roll call vote was taken. Councilwoman Dodd abstained from voting on checks 36110 and 36183 to Dodd's Tree Service. Motion carried.
- Unpaid Bills and Disbursements for the Month of December 2023.
  - Councilwoman Mills moved to approve the unpaid bills and disbursements for the month of December 2023 for the amended amount of \$359,562.86, which includes DDA Bonds and Interest. Seconded by Councilman Kwiatkowski.
  - A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried unanimously.

**General Business:**

- Consideration of Appointment.
  - Councilwoman Darling moved to appoint Lyndee Zeigler to the Parks and Recreation Commission, term to expire July 1, 2025. Seconded by Councilwoman Dodd.
  - Councilwoman Darling requested that if someone is appointed to a Commission, for that person to come to the meeting so Council can meet them.
  - A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried unanimously.
- Mark Bronson – Housing Commission Updates.
  - Housing Commissioner Mark Bronson updated Council on what is going on with the Housing Commission. Bronson brought up an email that was sent out that had some concerned. Bronson went through the topics of the email that was sent and discussed what is happening with Council. Bronson said the Section 18 application is ready to submit to HUD and plan to do submit that this week.
  - Councilwoman Darling and Councilwoman Mills asked Commissioner Bronson some questions.
  - Bronson responded to those questions and further discussed with Council.
- Police and Fire Levy Presentation – Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin and Councilwoman Mills.
  - Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin told the public that after the December 12, 2023 meeting where the Police and Fire Levy was passed, he wanted to discuss further in depth at this meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin presented and discussed taxable value in Cheboygan over time, inflation, City revenue, and City grants/funds. Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin shared a chart regarding the City revenues versus expenditures and discussed that to the public. Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin discussed Public Act 33 of 1951. Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin talked about the history of the levy within the City of Cheboygan. Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin gave a history regarding the taxes in the City. Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin discussed how with this levy, there will be relief from the general fund since police and fire take up 47% of the City's budget.
  - Sabolsky discussed ARPA funds and how they were spent. Sabolsky discussed the new equipment that would be able to be purchased with the passage of this levy. Sabolsky talked about the City's finance history.
  - Councilwoman Mills addressed comments and questions that were on social media. Comments such as there should have been more notice for the hearing, the City should work with the Sheriff's Department for police services, that there should be an income tax implemented, etc. Councilwoman Mills discussed further regarding the levy and its importance.

**City Manager's Report:**

- Sabolsky reported on the dam risk assessment proposal. That has been submitted to EGLE and we have been selected to move onto the next round. That deals with the Black River Watershed dams. Sabolsky reported that this grant is due at the end of January and he will be working with HRC on this. There is a 20% match to this grant.
- Sabolsky reported on the demolition grant from Labor and Economic Opportunity. The City received \$155,000. We are working with Susan Wenzlik and Fishbeck. The environmental

reviews are being done right now. This will demo the old parts of the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

- Regarding the Community Centers grant from Labor and Economic Opportunity, Sabolsky was updated by the State and we should know mid-January if we received the grant.
- Sabolsky reported on some issues regarding the Tissue Depot building. Sabolsky is working on a detailed letter from the City to the property owner regarding the City's expectations and policies that need to be met as they move along. Sabolsky also mentioned that there are some people possibly interested in purchasing the property of the Tissue Depot for economic development.

**Public Comments:**

- Roger Kopernik spoke regarding the passage of the levy. Kopernik felt there wasn't enough representation for the residents regarding this levy. Kopernik voiced he didn't like the way this levy happened and doesn't agree with the levy.
- Janet Gahn commented on the Council packet from the December 12, 2023 meeting and the letter from Robert White opposing the levy. Gahn asked who decided on five mills for this levy. Gahn commented on the Council meeting minutes expressing there should be more written details. Gahn voiced there should have been two public hearings for the levy. Gahn expressed her upmost respect for the Police and Fire Departments. Gahn voiced her agreement with Kopernik and how she feels the levy was rushed.
- Chris Sangster stated that he does not reside in Cheboygan but is a business owner within the City. Sangster spoke voicing his concerns regarding the levy and that other business owners in town are also concerned. Sangster expressed his agreement with Kopernik and Gahn regarding the levy.
- Sharon Lange stated that she lives outside of town but is a business owner within the City. Lange said she appreciated the background and information given by Council regarding the levy. Lange shared some research she collected regarding Finance Committee meetings and mention of the levy within the year of 2023 within the Council meeting minutes. Lange commented to Council that this levy is about process, procedure and transparency and it was not there.
- Ray Lofgren commented that three people that live within the condominium near Councilwoman Mills have contacted him voicing their disagreement with the levy. Lofgren spoke regarding the number of cancelled meetings in the 2023 year. Lofgren commented on how not everyone within the City can afford this levy.
- Greg Elliott expressed that tonight's meeting should have been the first meeting Council had to start discussing the levy with the public and discussing how this levy will be implemented into the budget process in the following year. Elliott confirmed with Council that if he calls or emails, they will talk to him.
- Joe Derk said he does not live in town but owns property within the City limits. Derk shared his opinion to Council regarding finances, taxes and spending. Derk expressed if five mills are coming in, expenses should be getting cut somewhere. Derk believes the residents of this town should have the right to vote on this levy.
- David Martin commented on Commissioner Bronson's presentation and expressed that maybe the City should find a different partner for the housing remodel project. Martin said he supports the Police and Fire Departments and thanked Council for volunteering their time. Martin encouraged members of the audience to run for Council as there is an election this year.

- Wes LeMarble commented on how his son is a City of Cheboygan firefighter. LeMarble commented that the equipment his son received when he joined was older than his son. LeMarble voiced that he is on a fixed income and doesn't want his taxes raised, but he wants to make sure the Fire Department gets the proper equipment they need.
- Jordan Hogg expressed his support for the levy, but is upset with the process of how this levy was presented and done. Hogg discussed that residents have the right to come to meetings to ask questions and if this process was done differently, there probably wouldn't be so much push back. Hogg voiced his disappointment with Council's approach and response regarding the levy.
- Sabolsky responded to a comment made by Hogg stating he was taking notes regarding public comment. Sabolsky and Hogg discussed their opinions on addressing citizens during public comment.

**Council Response to Public Comments:**

- Councilwoman Darling commented regarding the public notice for the hearing, stating the contents of the public hearing notice. Councilwoman Darling voiced that she does not believe that Council had enough information regarding the levy to vote on it and that the public should have had the opportunity to vote on this. Councilwoman Darling expressed the presentations done by Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin and Councilwoman Mills should have been done before the vote, not after. Councilwoman Darling asked why this was rushed. Councilwoman Darling commented on equipment that has been purchased for the Police and Fire Departments already. Councilwoman Darling voiced her opposition for this levy.
- Councilwoman Mills responded to Gahn's question of who decided on the five mills, explaining that Sabolsky gave Council the information and Sabolsky recommended five. Councilwoman Mills stated that it is up to Council to vote on it. Councilwoman Mills stated that meeting minutes are meant to be abbreviated and not transcripts. Audio is available online to listen to the meetings. Councilwoman Mills addressed Sangster's comment regarding a social media quote. Councilwoman Mills discussed the Finance Committee's meeting schedule, stating it as needed.
- Councilman Kwiatkowski discussed the Charter. Councilman Kwiatkowski discussed the Charter's millage of fifteen mills and that it cannot be raised or lowered unless the Charter is revised. Councilman Kwiatkowski discussed the departments of the City and those fifteen mills from the Charter fund all those departments.

**Committee Updates:**

- No committee reports from Mayor Pro Tem Bedwin or Councilwoman Dodd. Councilwoman Mills stated Commissioner Bronson covered her report.
- Councilwoman Darling didn't have a report. Councilwoman Darling asked about Gahn's comment regarding the Finance Committee and standing committees.
- Gahn stated that she asked if the Finance Committee was a standing committee. Gahn stated that standing committees are not allowed per Charter. Gahn has not received an answer to her question.

**Messages and Communications from Mayor and Council Members:**

- Councilwoman Darling stated her support for the City’s Police and Fire Departments and the great work they do. Councilwoman Darling doesn’t want them to take this as an affront.

**Adjournment:**

- Mayor Mallory adjourned the meeting at 8:36pm.

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Mayor Brett Mallory

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Clerk Alyssa Singles

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Mayor Pro Tem Adam Bedwin

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Councilwoman Diane Mills

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Councilman Kenneth Kwiatkowski

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Councilwoman Mary Darling

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Councilwoman Diane E. Raab

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Councilwoman Hayley Dodd