

City of Comfrey Minutes
December 10, 2024 at 6:30 PM
Comfrey Community Center

The City Council of Comfrey met in regular session on Tuesday, December 10, 2024 at 6:30 PM in the community center with all council members present. Also in attendance were S Berberich, J Veerkamp, C Radtke, R Cronquist, O Todd, and Attorney Paul Muske. Mayor Richter presided.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was recited.

The agenda was reviewed and fiber optic update was added under “Old Business.”

The November 12, 2024 regular meeting minutes were approved on a motion made by Arnsdorf, second by Redman and carried unanimously.

Total bills in the amount of \$80,409.06 were reviewed and approved on a motion made by Redman, second by Evers and carried unanimously.

A resolution expressing acceptance and appreciation for donations to the fire department and first responders of \$500 to each on a motion made by Arnsdorf, second by Evers and carried unanimously.

The November financial report was reviewed and approved on a motion made by Arnsdorf, second by Redman and carried unanimously.

Berberich has talked with Minnesota Rural Water again and they suggested putting a pressure gauge on each fire hydrant and start shutting off areas of town to look for a leak once it warms up again. R&F Enterprises got the 830 feet of shrubs cut down behind the baseball field.

The fire department items will be reviewed under new business.

First responder Captain Jill Veerkamp asked the council about rehoming the AED that was given to the police department by them. It will be discussed until police items. The department elected Jill Veerkamp as Captain, Sandy Johns as Treasurer and Josh Crowley as Secretary. The first responders have their refresher training set for January.

Library board minutes from the September meeting were reviewed. The board may need to look for a new member due to conflicts with attending meetings.

The police report was reviewed.

Roberta Cronquist and Owen Todd were present from Bolton & Menk to update the feasibility options from the study on drainage improvements. They reviewed different areas they found that could be leading to the possible problems areas during high rain events. Maps of the city drainage system and county tiles were shared with the council. The next steps will be to take the concepts shown on the mapping and move to a finalized recommendation.

Information from the final SCDP funding annual report prepared by DSI was shared with the council. A total of eleven projects were completed in Comfrey. Due to the project sizes, \$14,818.00 of construction dollars and \$2204.55 administration dollars were sent back to the State SCDP funding.

Mayor Richter will follow up with Lamberton on interest in the police squad. A motion was made by Kastner, second by Redman and carried unanimously to allow the first responder department to rehome the AED to a business in town. The police phone lines were discussed again. After a year of the new contact information being available for the Sheriff's Department, a motion was made by Kastner, second by Arnsdorf and carried unanimously to close the Verizon Wireless and Frontier Comfrey Police department accounts and discontinue the phone numbers.

The police contract was reviewed with the updated numbers and approved for 2025 at \$83.55 per contract hour at 10 hours per week on a motion made by Arnsdorf, second by Evers and carried unanimously.

President of the Fire Relief Association Clint Radtke brought forward a request to increase the association's pension by a \$100 per year of service. This would bring them to \$900 for every year of service they are members. The association currently has the funds invested to support the increase. The council was reminded that ultimately the city would be liable for any shortage the plan cannot cover but feel comfortable with the investments the department has made. A motion was made to increase the pension by \$100 per year of service to \$900 effective January 1, 2025 by Evers, second by Redman and carried unanimously with councilor Rick Kastner abstaining.

Discussion was had about the municipal building boiler. It is currently working well but is 26 years old and running at 80% efficiency. An estimate for replacement has been received by Schwickert's and St James Electric is currently putting one together. Region 9 and Mayor Richter were notified of a possible grant to help cover the replacement costs of the boiler. The grant has a 10% match by the city which could be up to \$40,000. St. James Electric is scheduled to look at the boiler on December 19th and prepare an estimate. The council would like to wait on any decisions until after St. James Electric has looked at the boiler and see what options they present.

Information and costs on a new city website provider were reviewed. The current provider GovOffice is increasing annual costs up to \$2374 per year. Clerk Kelly has previewed a site provided by Municipal Impact that also allows notifications to go out to people who choose to subscribe to the site and has positive reviews by other small communities in the area. The annual cost of the new website would be \$665 with a \$400 one-time set up fee. A motion was made by Kastner, second by Redman and carried unanimously to contract with Municipal Impact as the new city website provider.

A motion was made by Arnsdorf, second by Kastner and carried unanimously to appoint Jill Veerkamp as First Responder Captain and Steve Berberich as Fire chief for 2025.

The 2025 tobacco license was approved for the Comfrey C-Store on a motion by Arnsdorf, second by Kastner and carried unanimously.

A cannabis agreement with Cottonwood County was reviewed along with their proposed ordinance. Comfrey is unique because it is located in two counties. Brown County is starting to review their options. No action taken at this time and it will be reviewed at the January City Council meeting.

Per terms of the PFA financing agreement a Wastewater Infrastructure System Replacement Fund has been established to deposit \$.50 per 1000 gallons of flow annually during the life of the loan for future rehabilitation or expansion of the treatment system. This transfer deposit of \$8,430.00 was approved on motion by Redman, second by Evers and carried unanimously.

The final levy was set at \$349,925.00. This amount is the same total as the proposed levy presented at the September 25, 2024 council meeting. The final 2025 levy and budget was reviewed and approved on a motion by Redman, second by Arnsdorf and carried unanimously.

A motion to authorize the clerk-treasurer to assign general funds as needed for year ending December 31, 2024 made by Kastner, second by Redman and carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Kastner, second by Evers and carried unanimously to change the meeting to January 7, 2025 at 5:00 pm in the Comfrey Community Center.

Mayor Richter contacted Bruce Hanson of Hanson Communications for updates on the broadband/fiber grant project. They have the project engineering completed, mapping done and the materials purchased. They plan to attend a future council meeting in early spring to review any additional updates. The project should be completed in 2025.

The meeting was adjourned on motion made by Arnsdorf, second by Evers at 8:20 pm.