

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

The City Council of Comfrey met in regular session on Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at 6:30 PM in the community center with all council members present. Also in attendance were S Berberich, J Veerkamp, J Seidl, D Callanan and Attorney Paul Muske. Mayor Richter presided.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was recited.

The agenda was reviewed with no additions.

The August 7, 2024 regular meeting minutes with correction of the typo under bills and August 14, 2024 long range planning minutes were approved on a motion made by Arnsdorf, second by Evers and carried unanimously.

Total bills in the amount of \$104,658.04 were reviewed and approved on a motion made by Redman, second by Kastner and carried unanimously.

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

Berberich reported the pump which fills the water tower quit working and had to be sent in for repairs.

The fire department has proposed increasing section rates from \$150 to \$160 for the 2025 contract.

First responder captain Jill Veerkamp inquired about age limits for joining the first responders. She has an interested student in the age range of 16-18 years old. Clerk Kelly is going to do some checking into insurance coverage and reach out to the League of Minnesota Cities for any other guidance they may have.

Library board representatives attended the Brown County Commissioners meeting to request an increase in library aid. The commissioners approved a \$1000 increase for each of the 5 libraries in Brown County for the 2025 fiscal year.

The police report was reviewed and Brown County Sheriff Jason Seidl reported they are working with Paul Muske and the State to get our ordinances uploaded for e-charging. The council also discussed the police equipment and squad and would like to pull some values together for the possible sale of the items.

The Small Cities Development Grant is coming to an end in September and there are enough funds for one more small grant. DSI has reached out to several people in town and will continue to work with Comfrey and Sanborn to use all of the funds.

Dick Callanan voiced concerns about what he felt were ordinance violations. The council and Sheriff Seidl assured him that true violations are being addressed but some do take time. He also asked about the storage of the past Comfrey Times editions. The city is currently keeping them in storage as VanHee Media did not have a location for them. Mayor Richter said the library does have old papers on microfilm for people to have access to.

A gambling permit for the Comfrey Fire Relief Association for November 23, 2024 was approved on a motion made by Arnsdorf, seconded by Redman and carried unanimously.

Mayor Richter provided information to the council on a grant to install solar and battery backup out at the waste water treatment plant. If the grant is awarded, it would require a minimum of 10% matching funds from the city. Current estimates of the project are roughly \$150,000. Discussion was had on pros and cons of the project. A motion was made by Redman, second by Evers to move forward with the application of the grant. The motion passed with a 4 to 1 vote with all in favor but councilor Kastner.

The council reviewed a quote from Lamberton Heating & Plumbing to replace two aging air conditioner units for the community center with funds remaining from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Currently the city has \$20,268.50 in remaining funds with \$10,000 earmarked for the broadband project. Discussion was had about updating all units in the municipal building since they are all over 25 years old. An awarded grant will be covering the replacement of the city office unit and the install of a unit for the fire hall which leaves 3 old units remaining. A motion was made by Kastner, second by Evers and carried unanimously to replace all 3 units with the remaining ARPA funds at an estimated cost of \$20,835 plus wiring with the additional costs from the general fund and the \$10,000 matching funds for the broadband project from capital equipment.

The library certification of minimum local support for operating expense requirement for 2025 was set at \$12,900 by the state. This is unchanged from last year and is the minimum base amount required to continue participation in our regional public library system. This was approved on a motion made by Arnsdorf, second by Evers and carried unanimously.

The annual Fire Relief Association report form SC-24 was approved on a motion made by Arnsdorf, second by Redman and carried unanimously. No additional contribution is required for 2025.

Clerk Kelly notified the council the Board of Review training is open again. The city should have at least one additional trained member for the upcoming year. The training link will be sent out to all council members to have the opportunity to take the training.

The rural service district reduction percentage will remain unchanged for 2025 at .3 to 1. The annual certification was made on a motion made by Evers, second by Kastner and carried unanimously.

Clerk Kelly updated the council that our current utility billing software was bought out and will no longer be available by the end of the year. gWorks has purchased UBMax and will be transitioning all users to their new software if notice is not given. Kelly reviewed options and pricing for utility billing software from gWorks and GovAsyst. GovAsyst has been recommended by the city auditor and other small-town clerks in the area. The recommendation is to add their financial software also because QuickBooks no longer supports a desktop version which is what the city currently uses. A motion was made by Redman, second by Evers and carried unanimously to move forward with the GovAsyst software with an annual cost of \$1950 for the utility software and \$1750 for the financial software and a onetime setup fee of \$500 each.

The Fire Department and First Responders have notified the council and townships they would like to increase their per section rate by \$10. Their per section rates are currently the lowest in the surrounding area. A motion was made by Redman, second by Evers and carried unanimously for the rate increase for 2025.

The Farmward LP contract to purchase 9000 gallons of LP at \$1.55 per gallon was approved on a motion made by Redman, second by Arnsdorf and carried unanimously. The city does have a credit for unused gallons that will be applied toward the new contract.

A special meeting was set for Wednesday, September 25, 2024 at 6:00 pm to review the budget, wages and set the preliminary levy on a motion made by Evers, second by Arnsdorf and carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned on motion made by Arnsdorf, second by Evers at 7:55 p.m.