

**OAK GROVE COUNCIL
Regular Meeting Minutes Monday,
November 27, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Oak Grove City Council was called to order by Mayor Rolf at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, November 27 2023. Pledge of Allegiance was said, and roll call taken.

Present: Weston Rolf, Mayor
Angie Bray Johnson, Council Member
Paul Tradewell, Council Member
John West, Council Member
Mike Wylie, Council Member (Remote)

Also Present: Loren Wickham, City Administrator
Billi Larson, City Clerk
Chuck Schwartz, MSA
Rob Engler, Fire Chief
Matt Anderson, Director of Public Works

1. PUBLIC FORUM

After two calls for public comment and hearing none, Mayor Rolf closed the public forum.

2. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilmember West announced the Christmas Tree Lighting Event happening on December 1, 2023 from 5:30-8:00.

Mayor Rolf discussed the preliminary tax statements that were sent out from Anoka County. He explained that the amounts sent out can only go down and not up so any adjustments that are made until finalized can only lower the amounts.

Mayor Rolf read an email he sent to all seven of the Anoka County Commissioner, Lt. Knox and City Administrator Wickham. The email reads as follows:

"Hello Commissioners,

For those of you that may not know me, my name is Weston Rolf, and I am the Mayor of Oak Grove. I am sure you are aware at this point, the City of Oak Grove signed a two-year contract with you and the Anoka County Sheriff's Office about a year ago. The contract was agreed upon to go through 12/31/2024. We signed the contract to protect ourselves and agreed to a 3.31% increase, which is about a \$27,500 increase for 2024. Commissioner Scott Schulte signed this same contract I am referring to.

Earlier this year, you voted to increase wages for the Anoka County Deputies by \$5.00 an hour. I was contacted in June by the Anoka County Sheriff's Office and was informed we had to now pay the shortfall of approximately \$88,000 relating to the 2024 contract we already signed. I'm not trying to make this email argumentative, but we signed a contract, and we should follow the contract and not have to pay additional funds because of the decision that was made on your end. I am guessing most of you were not even aware we had a signed contract for 2024. Obviously, someone on your end did not remind you of this. Also, the blame is being put on the \$5.00 increase, but simple math including benefits does not come to \$88,000. When you add the \$27,500 that we already agreed upon, you're looking at a \$117,000 increase.

Sheriff Wise took it upon himself to reduce the \$88,000 to \$44,000 to try and help the situation. Honestly, I appreciate his efforts to try and solve the problem, but I don't agree with that either. I do appreciate Sheriff Wise attempting to make things right by reducing the \$88,000 to \$44,000, but he now must use his yearly budget to cover the difference. That is not fair to him either. Your board agreed to the increase, I believe you should fund the \$88,000, or even the \$44,00, rather than the sheriff having to use his own budget. His own budget is meant for other things, but that is between you to work that out.

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I requested a meeting with Sheriff Wise, Commissioner Braastad, and Commissioner Gamache on November 13th to see if we could come up with an agreement. It was a great meeting, but we did not come to an agreement. However, Commissioner Gamache mentioned he would mention this at the next commissioner meeting, which was much appreciated, but my understanding is he did not. That same evening, our council voted four to one to pay the \$44,000 demand. The only reason we agreed to this was, so we don't have to pay the \$88,000 next year as an added line item. We felt we are not representing our community members well if we are willing to pay the full \$88,00 in 2025 to prove a point.

I know some of you follow me online and may have read some of the comments. A few support our decision, even though they don't agree with having to break the contract, but the majority do not. I knew from the beginning our community would not handle this well. Since November 13th, I have received numerous phone calls, text messages, and emails from people who are irate that we agreed to give \$44,000 when we had a signed contract. Again, I knew this would happen and it did.

I attended the SD 31 meeting on November 21st and Commissioner Reinert mentioned that Commissioner Gamache told him the problem has been resolved. Talk about throwing more fuel on the fire. The reason I called for the vote on November 13th, was because that was the only night, we were going to have a full council before we had to give Sheriff Wise our response. I wanted the full council to vote on this item. Yes, we did vote to send the money, but you still can do the right thing. I have not signed the updated contracts yet.

I know we are receiving \$394,000 in state aid and that appears to be the money that you are requesting. However, due to the increase this money will be spent to help keep our budget down in future years. The money can also be used for other things. Yes, maybe the state should not have allowed that, but they did.

Had Sheriff Wise, or any one of you, contacted us earlier on in this process and asked us to partner up to help solve this problem, maybe we would have gone at it differently. Unfortunately, we were not consulted at all and that is not fair, or even professional, if you ask me.

As most of you are probably aware, I have been in law enforcement for 23 years, so I understand the problem with recruiting and retention probably more than most of you. I mentioned in my response to this at our meeting, I supported the increase. What I did not support is having to pay the difference when we are under contract. I grew up understanding that a written contract meant something. I'm sure most of you are tired of my whining about this and frankly I'm tired of even talking about it. Though, I have 9,000 people to represent, and they are not happy and think I should have never caved. They are also not happy with anyone on this email.

I want to have a good working relationship with all of you, but I need you to help me too. I am requesting that one of you will add this item to your agenda at your next meeting and make a motion to use your 4.144 million dollars to cover the full \$88,000 this one time. Obviously, our contract is going to be higher for 2025, but having the \$88,000 added as a line item in our 2025 contract when we have a contract for 2024 is not fair or right.

I have been involved at some level with the City of Oak Grove for the past 10 years and I have never seen the residents as upset as they are at this moment. This doesn't just fall on me either, they are upset with you too. I am asking that you please help me, so we can help each other move beyond this. Yes, \$44,000 is a lot of money but when you are receiving 4.144 for the same use and we have a signed contract, it only seems fair that you cover the full \$88,000. Maybe that is not fair to other cities, but they also did not have a signed contract.

The last thing I want to do is reduce our hours of coverage when I worked so hard to get 24 hours. Though, if I can't get this problem resolved and we do have to reopen the 2024 contract and pay the additional \$44,000, I would like a bid for 20 hours of coverage starting in 2024. That is not a threat, or me playing games, but I need to look at all of our options.

Like I mentioned at our meeting last week, I feel like some of you think I am the villain, but all I am trying to do is represent the city and have a contract mean something.

I would welcome a phone call from any one of you if you want to discuss this more.

Thank you for your consideration! Signed Weston Rolf, Mayor of Oak Grove."

Mayor Rolf commented that he did copy the Sheriff and our liaison but did not expect a response from either. He indicated that Commissioner Meisner (District 7) responded and they had a positive conversation. Commissioner Reinert – Vice Chair (District 3) also responded. Commissioner Jeppson (District 6) responded that she was not familiar with the situation but would educate herself on it but her response was positive. Commission Gamache (District 5) responded and stated that he put together an Anoka County Board of Action Item together that they will hear the item on December 13, 2023 for the preliminary and the final vote on December 19, 2023. He is asking that they take action to cover the \$88,000 one time. Mayor Rolf mentioned that he did not personally hear from Commissioner Braastad (District 2) but she did give approval to Commissioner Gamache to put the action item on the agenda. Commissioners Schulte (District 4) and Commissioner Look (District 1) had not responded.

Council member West requested that the letter in its entirety be included in the permanent public record. He also commented that he was the only one that voted in opposition on November 13th and this was what he wanted when he voted against paying the \$44,000 was giving them the opportunity to take this action and vote.

Council member Wylie commented that even though Council member West was the only one that voted in opposition he was not alone in feeling that way he did. Council member Wylie agreed with Council member West and indicated that he nearly voted in opposition as well.

Council member Tradewell commented that both Commissioners were present and heard Mayor Rolf say the same things he did in the email and for two months nothing was done until the city took a vote.

Council member Bray Johnson commented that she didn't think anyone caved in the agreement and that she appreciates the compromise made by the Anoka County Sheriff's Office. She noted that she is surprised that this many people are willing to fight for us and she thanked the Mayor for continuing to follow-up.

3. SETTING OF REGULAR AGENDA

Two items were added to the agenda. Items (i) Resolution 23-152 Donation to the Tree Lighting event and (j) Resolution 23-153 Approving Conditional Offer of On-call Firefighter. There was also a minor modification There was also a modification of the draft minutes to further clarify the 2024 budget discussion as it relates to the Fire Department from the November 13, 2023 Regular City Council Meeting.

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL TO APPROVE THE REGULAR AGENDA AS PRESENTED WITH THE ADDITIONS. All in favor.

4. APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING NOVEMBER 13, 2023 AND WORK SESSION NOVEMBER 13, 2023

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING AND WORK SESSION MINUTES. All in favor.

5. ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF COMMISSION AND COMMITTEE MINUTES

- a. Planning Commission – November 16, 2023
- b. Parks Commission – November 15, 2023

THE COUNCIL ACKNOWLEDGED THE SUBMITTED MINUTES.

6. PETITIONS, INDIVIDUALS, PRESENTATIONS, AND INQUIRIES

There were no presentations or petitions presented.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda contains several items, which are acted upon by the Council in one motion. Upon request by any one Councilmember, City staff, or the public a consent agenda item may be removed and put on the regular agenda for discussion and consideration.

- a. Claims and Accounts
- b. Resolution 23-145 Summarizing Administrator Performance Review
- c. Resolution 23-146 Approval to purchase water filtration system at Fire Station 2
- d. Resolution 23-147 Preliminary Plat – Timbers Hideaway
- e. Resolution 23-148 Site Plan Review – PinTv – 19590 Tamarack St NW
- f. Resolution 23-149 Conditional Offer – Michael Gensmer
- g. Resolution 23-150 Approval to purchase flood lights and battery packs for Fire Department
- h. Resolution 23-151 Accepting Donation for Lighting Event – Agape Moments, LLC
- i. Resolution 23-152 Accepting Donation for Lighting Event – St. Francis American Legion 622
- j. Resolution 23-153 Conditional Offer of Employment– Curt Olsen

Mayor Rolf pulled item (d) from the consent agenda. He commented that there has been a lot of discussion regarding this item and he feels that City Staff, the Parks and Planning Commission, and the applicant all did a good job of compromising to find solutions and he thanked all for working together.

Council member Tradewell pulled items (h) and (i) from the consent agenda. He took the opportunity to thank the Rolf family for their donation to the lighting event.

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER WEST, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS (a), (b), (c), (e), (f), (g) and (j). All in favor.

MOTION MADE BY MAYOR ROLF, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA ITEM (d). All in favor.

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS (h) and (i). All in favor.

8. CITY ENGINEER

- a. Engineer Updates

City Engineer, Chuck Schwartz, updated Council regarding a request from the Minnesota Department of Health to inventory all water lines for lead fixtures. He is working with Matt Anderson, the Director of Public Works to identify the scope of the project. This does not affect any household that has a sewer/well system.

9. FIRE

- a. Fire Chief Updates

Fire Chief, Rob Engler, gave an update to Council regarding the Heartsafe program and it's 75 participants. He went through the October stats noting that there have been 6 gas leak calls for service. He also noted that Santa will be visiting neighborhoods in the fire truck on December 9th. Council member Tradewell asked regarding the search for a duty truck. Chief Engler commented that he was looking at a vehicle later that night.

10. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES & DISCUSSION

- a. Administrator Updates

Administrator Wickham discussed the upcoming final council meeting of the year and the Truth and Taxation Hearing. He commented that the City of Oak Grove is in the bottom four cities for tax rate. He updated the Council that the new population signs have been installed on County roads and Public Works have a few to install. He mentioned the Lighting Event and that there was only one tree sponsor this year, Jake Humphry with Electric Sign and Lighting. He reminded the Council that he forwarded some information from Anoka County regarding the estimated costs for roundabouts on Viking Boulevard and he will have the Assistant County Engineer attend an upcoming meeting to update them on the costs. He also updated them that the AV system had been fixed and that a new laptop will be needed soon.

11. MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS/UPDATES

Council member Bray Johnson discussed that she had talked with the property owner that had several trees cut for the bridge project on 22 and they were adjusting well to not having the coverage from traffic that they once had. She also talked about the challenges that the residents on Fox Street are having with heavy equipment. City Engineer, Chuck Schwartz, agreed to contact the project coordinator regarding the issues.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 11, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

1. **CLOSED SESSION - City Council for an Attorney-Client Privileged Discussion Pursuant to Minnesota State Statute 13D.05(b) to Discuss the City's Options to Participate in a Class Action Settlements Entitled: In RE: Aqueous Film Forming Foams Products Liability Litigation; United States District Court, District of South Carolina – Charleston Division; MDL No. 2:18-mn-2873-RMB; Case No. 2:23-cv-03147-RMG.**

12.

The City Council went into closed session at 6:48 pm. The regular meeting resumed at 7:05pm.

13. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER TRADEWELL, SECOND BY COUNCIL MEMBER BRAY JOHNSON TO ADJOURN. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Billi Larson
City Clerk