

**CITY OF VIROQUA  
COUNCIL MINUTES  
JANUARY 31, 2023**

**1. Roll call:**

The regular meeting of the Common Council was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 31, 2023 by Mayor Justin Running at City Hall and via Zoom with Alderpersons Andrew Bergum, Tanja Birke, Todd Spaeth, Cyndy Hubbard, John Thompson, Steve Willis and Kristal Welter present. Alderpersons David Tryggestad and Joe Ahler were excused. Also present were City Clerk Lori Polhamus, City Administrator Nate Torres, City Engineer/Public Works Director Sarah Grainger, Library Director Trina Erickson, Police Chief Rick Niedfeldt, Fire Chief Chad Buros, Chad Hoyum, Kent Fish, Jim Carroll, Al Buss, Evan Blattner, Dallas Seevers, Eddie Nix and Carson LaBelle

**2. Approval of the January 10, 2023 Regular and January 17, 2023 Special Council minutes** – Motion by Alderperson Welter/second by Alderperson Birke to approve the minutes of the previous meetings. Voice vote all in favor. Motion carried.

**3. Council Announcements** – None

**4. First period for public comment** – Dallas Seevers (620 W Decker) – stated there is private interest in the old city hall for retail spaces and apartments. Eddie Nix (518 Walnut) – the old city hall has amazing history and would like to see council consider options 3 or 4 as he is interested as well. Evan Blattner (651 E Court St) – would like to be able to call city hall versus the police station on ordinance enforcement. Cyndy Hubbard read a comment from Aaron Parker regarding the old city hall and he agrees with option 4.

**5. Approval of extraterritorial certified survey map – Mitch Oldham (Plan Commission)** – Motion by Alderperson Hubbard/second by Alderperson Spaeth to approve the certified survey map. Voice vote all in favor. Motion carried.

**6. Approval of chicken permit renewal for 794 County Road NN – Alex Brusubardis** – Motion by Alderperson Welter/second by Alderperson Bergum to approve the chicken permit renewal. Voice vote all in favor. Motion carried.

**7. Operator license approvals (Public Safety)** – Motion by Alderperson Birke/second by Alderperson Thompson to approve a license for Sarah Krenn pending background check. Voice vote all in favor. Motion carried.

**8. Review and approval of amendment to lease agreement for Wild West Days** – this would add 2 ½ acres to the lease agreement and will pro-rate it for the 10 months of 2023 with the full payment due in 2024. A 90-day notice is also included in the agreement in case the fire station chooses this location. Motion by Alderperson Spaeth/second by Alderperson Welter to approve the lease agreement amendment for Wild West Days. Voice vote all in favor. Motion carried.

**9. Approval of resolution for Vibrant Spaces Grant** – The grant was submitted with an ask of \$50,000. Designs would start July 1<sup>st</sup>. The room would be available 6am-10pm seven days a week with reservations through the library. Erickson reviewed the renderings for the council and budget of \$338,000. They will bid late fall and Erickson is working on fundraising. Motion by Alderperson Birke/second by Alderperson Willis to approve resolution 023RS001. Voice vote all in favor. Motion carried.

Council moved to item #11 before returning to remainder of the agenda.

**10. Discussion/action on resolution urging Legislature & Governor to fix broken system of funding critical local services** – Motion by Alderperson Thompson/second by Alderperson Hubbard to approve resolution 023RS003. Voice vote all in favor. Motion carried.

**11. Approval of resolution regarding PSC grant for Vernon County Energy District** – Al Buss stated they are a non-profit to do energy projects in the county. They have done 300 energy assessments, 90 personal consultations, installed 75 energy monitors and did 60 home energy audits. This is a competitive grant at no cost to the City but is a stronger application with other entities in support. LaFarge, Viola, Town of Stark, Vernon County and the Kickapoo Schools are also in support. Motion by Alderperson Birke/second by Alderperson Welter to approve resolution 023RS002 in support of the grant application. Voice vote all in favor. Motion carried.

Mayor Running turned the meeting over to Council President Tanja Birke for agenda item 12.

**12. Discussion with possible action on proposed tax rate increase** – The City of Westby was in support of a \$1.00 across the board increase, however they have not had a council meeting to confirm. Current rates in Viroqua are base - \$2.75, Youth - \$1.75 and Seniors - \$1.75. Westby rates are base - \$3.00, Youth - \$2.00, and Seniors - \$1.75. After discussion a motion was made by Alderperson Hubbard/second by Alderperson Bergum to propose a \$3.75 base fee, Youth fee of \$2.75 and Senior Fee of \$2.50 for both Westby and Viroqua. Roll call vote all in favor. Motion carried. A public hearing will be scheduled prior to any increases for public input.

**13. Approval of pay request #13 for Brickl Bros – City Hall project** – Motion by Alderperson Hubbard/second by Alderperson Thompson to approve pay request #13 for \$56,439.71. Roll call vote all in favor. Motion carried.

**14. Discussion with possible action regarding old City Hall building (202 N Main St)** – the building has three boilers but only one is working which is the oldest of the three. There was a water leak in a service line to an upstairs toilet causing a lot of damage. Kent Fish from GEC was available to review the inspection report that was completed. Four options were proposed from renovating the building, tearing the building down, selling the building or offering the building to multiple developers. One immediate concern is the roof which is past its useful life and would estimate a cost of \$35,000-\$45,000 to repair. The site line of the building is really poor and safety should come first which would be to remove the building. It was questioned about how much buildable space would be available if the current building wasn't there. Alderperson Spaeth suggested getting an appraisal of the building. It was also suggested to check with the DOT regarding changing semi traffic to Broadway. There are interested developers in the building so an RFP process could be done without having to commit. This would allow the council to have more options to consider. Motion by Alderperson Willis/second by Alderperson Hubbard to open up the RFP process to get information from developers and address the concern for safety at the intersection of Main & Decker and Sarah Grainger will check with the DOT on the light options at the intersection. Voice vote all in favor. Motion carried.

**15. Possible closed session per WI Stats 19.85 (1)(g) – conferring with legal counsel for the governmental body who is rendering oral or written advice concerning strategy to be adopted by the body with respect to litigation in which it is or is likely to become involved – Chief of Police Investigation** – Motion by Alderperson Hubbard/second by Alderperson Welter to enter closed session at 8:59 pm. Roll call vote all in favor. Motion carried.

**16. Reconvene in open session with possible action on items discussed during closed session** – Motion by Alderperson Thompson/second by Alderperson Hubbard to reconvene in open session at 10:10 pm. Roll call vote all in favor. Motion carried. No action was taken.

**17. Payment of bills (Finance)** - Motion by Alderperson Hubbard/second by Alderperson Bergum to approve the payment of bills on report date 01/27/2023 in the amount of \$442,294.71 and additional bills on report date 01/31/2023 for \$56,076.31. Roll call vote all in favor. Motion carried.

**18. Second Period for Public Comment** – None

**19. Adjournment** - Motion made by Alderperson Spaeth/second by Alderperson Willis to adjourn the meeting at 10:14 p.m. Voice vote all in favor. Motion carried.

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Lori Polhamus, City Clerk