

COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

March 3, 2014

The Municipal Council of the City of Alpena met in regular session in the City Hall on the above date and was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the Mayor.

Present: Mayor Waligora, Councilmembers Sexton, Nielsen, Nowak, and Johnson.

Absent: None.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

MINUTES

The minutes of the regular session of February 17, 2014, closed session of February 17, 2014, and special session of February 18, 2014, were approved as printed.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Councilman Sexton, seconded by Councilwoman Nielsen, that the following Consent Agenda items be approved:

1. Bills Allowed – in the amount of \$301,647.93 be allowed and the Mayor and City Clerk authorized to sign warrants in payment of same.
2. Marina fee schedule amendments.

Carried by unanimous vote.

PUBLIC HEARING

WATER AND SEWER RATE INCREASES

Mayor Waligora announced a Public Hearing on the water and sewer rate increases. Greg Sundin, City Manager, and Rich Sullenger, City Engineer, presented a report. The public comment period was opened.

Ron Carpenter, 726 Long Lake Avenue, stated that the increases are misleading as to how much the bill will go up. He suggested that the City revisit the privatization versus public control of the water and sewer system. He stated the explanation on why City water and sewer rates are being raised is vague. He had his meter replaced, it was 39 years old, and the reading did not change with the new meter. He feels the way the water and sewer plant is run is not right. He asked council to vote no to the rate increases.

Tom VanDuinen, 1209 W. Washington Avenue, presented some statements and questions that he wanted to cover. He stated that the City's "facts" sheet is not true where it said that existing meters were no longer available requiring a switch to a different style. He stated there are thousands available. He then asked various questions about the management of the water and sewer system.

Angie Skiba, 635 River Street, asked where the proposed increased revenue is going to from the rate increases; specifically what projects? She requested clarification on the "ready to serve" charge. She then stated that the meter change-out had not been necessary. She does not like the idea of switching from quarterly bills to monthly bills because the billing charge would be 12 times a year rather than four. She asked council to vote no; do not make a decision tonight; do more research; and listen to the citizens of the City.

Tom VanDuinen stated that the City should not spend money on beautification, office remodeling at the plants and unnecessary meters, but rather spend it on the infrastructure.

Angie Skiba asked why the "ready to serve" charges are being proposed. She would like to see fees reduced at least by half. The citizens cannot afford the increases.

Wesley Gentry, a township resident and landlord in the City, suggested that the rate increases be implemented over a longer period of time. He figured the proposed water and sewer rate increase will cost him \$30,000. He stated that he and others may not pursue several tentative plans to do large scale, multi-million dollar projects if the water and sewer rates are implemented so quickly. He is very concerned about the future.

Jim Murphy, 221 Dawson Street, stated that he looked over all the City's numbers on the water and sewer rate increases and was very upset. Many people are retirees on fixed incomes. He asked council to reconsider the rate increase.

Chuck Piontkowski, 615 Eighth Avenue, is concerned about the rates. He knows the infrastructure is bad and there needs to be rate increases, but at what cost? He stated his concerns that if Alpena Township and the City enter into litigation and rates are lowered for the township, that they should also be lowered for City residents who already pay more than the township. He also asked what will happen to people who cannot pay their bill.

Juergen Thusat, 139 Outer Drive, asked why the City considers Alpena Township a customer and why the township is paying for the City's lack of planning. He stated that if the City and Alpena Township do not cooperate, it won't help future economic development.

Steve Kieliszewski, Alpena County Sheriff, stated he is concerned about the budget for the sheriff's department. His budget was set in October and this rate increase was not in the budget. The rate increase will also negatively affect his home budget.

Marie Twite, Alpena Township Supervisor, asked for the gallons that the township uses and pays for.

Ron Carpenter, stated that everyone recognizes we need rates to increase, but the sizable increase is too much.

The Clerk indicated that there were no written comments.

The public comment period was closed. Council discussion followed. The Mayor declared the Public Hearing closed.

WATER AND SEWER RATE INCREASES

Moved by Councilman Nowak, seconded by Councilwoman Johnson, to refer the proposed water and sewer rate increases back to city staff to prepare a two-year phase-in approach as presented by Councilman Nowak and a three-year phase-in as suggested by Councilman Sexton.

Carried by unanimous vote.

BUDGET REQUEST - TARGET ALPENA

Moved by Councilman Nowak, seconded by Councilwoman Nielsen, to receive and file Target Alpena's annual report and budget request.

Carried by unanimous vote.

On motion of Councilman Nowak, seconded by Councilman Sexton, the Council adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

MATTHEW J. WALIGORA
MAYOR

ATTEST:

Karen Hebert
City Clerk