CITY OF PELICAN RAPIDS COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 03-29-05

The City Council of the City of Pelican Rapids met in regular session at 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, 03-29-05, Council Chambers, City Hall. Mayor Wayne Runningen, Council Members Ben Woessner and John E. Waller, III, were present. Council Members David Gottenborg and Richard Peterson were absent. Administrator Don Solga, Clerk-Treasurer Glenys Ehlert, Utilities Superintendent Brent E. Frazier, City Engineer Pat
Reisnour, City Attorney Greg Larson, Julie Lammers and Brian Olson, utilities employees, Judith Marko, Mary Jaroch, Tom Hintgen of the Pelican Rapids Press, Diane Thorson and Tiny Holm of Otter Tail County were also present.

Meeting called to order by Mayor Runningen.

Recommendation to Transfer Funds from Fund 12 to Fund 2 was added to the Agenda.

Dianne Thorson of the county public health department and county emergency manager Tiny Holmes were present to discuss emergency management and public health disease outbreak. Thorson said that, in the case of a disease outbreak, the county would rely heavily on city government to work with the health department on a team effort.
Thorson reviewed the procedure for an emergency drill scheduled for this spring. Mayor Runningen asked about how the public health procedure would fit into the City's Emergency Plan. Thorson said the exercise would rely on the plans already developed.
"This is a plan I want to have in place, but I hope I never have to use it," Thorson said.

Administrator Don Solga reviewed Mary Jaroch's request for a hearing on an unpaid utility bill. The council and the renter discussed the delinquent utility bill, requirements for a payment plan and the rental housing ordinance. Jaroch contends that she is behind on monthly water bill payments to the City due, in part, to water leaking in the house's basement.

Mayor Runningen said if Housing Inspector Lyle Nesvold finds it uninhabitable, then the City of Pelican Rapids will pull the license to rent and she will have to move out. "I will contact Lyle Nesvold to inspect the property," Runningen said. "At this point, any water that goes through the meter is your responsibility," Runningen continued. "We will have the house inspected and City staff will work out the payment plan with you," Runningen said. "Lyle Nesvold is not going to bring the house up to current building standards, but to address life safety issues," he continued.

City Attorney Greg Larson said there are two objectives to the hearing process: is the bill accurate and is there a legal reason the water cannot be shut off? If there isn't any legal reason as to why the water cannot be shut off and if the bill is accurate, then the city is obligated to shut it off or it opens the door to anyone to ask for a hearing and avoid or postpone payment. Mayor Runningen said he is offering a payment plan and scheduling an additional housing inspection based on Mary Jaroch's water leak issues raised in October.

Engineer Pat Reisnour, of Interstate Engineering, explained the Wastewater Rate Study. The study recommends a change from strictly flow basis for West Central Turkeys, Inc. (WCT), the largest industrial user, to a combination fixed rate and flow based rate. The Rate Study and proposed rates have been developed after several meetings with city staff, Jennie O and Reisnour.

Motion by Waller, seconded by Woessner to approve the proposed wastewater rates, effective 04-01-05, establishing a fixed rate for an industrial user's primary account of $19,500 and changing the flow based rate to $1.80 per thousand gallons. There will be no fixed rate charge on subsidiary industrial accounts. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Woessner, seconded by Waller to approve the 2005 Sewer Fund Budget in the amount of $672,476.02. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Woessner, seconded by Waller to approve the 2005 Water Fund Budget in the amount of $383,000. Motion passed unanimously.

City Attorney Greg Larson was present for discussion of a proposed land sale. Mayor Runningen reviewed the proposed sale of city land adjacent to Egge Construction Inc.'s existing property. Attorney Larson disclosed that his firm has represented Egge Construction in the past. If there is no objection by the City, the firm will represent only the City's interests in this matter.

Mayor Runningen and Council agreed that the City would like the firm of Svingen, Hagstrom, Karkela, Cline & Dirks, PLLP, to represent the City in this matter. Larson recommended that a purchase agreement be postponed until the abstract is located and that the buyers be contacted to find out what law office they will be going through. Larson said they could negotiate the legal fees and other costs prior to drawing up the purchase agreement. Larson will report back to City Council on 04-11-05.

Motion by Waller, seconded by Woessner to approve the03-29-05 Accounts Payable Listing as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Administrator Don Solga said the Park Board met earlier today and recommended additional park board members. Motion by Waller, seconded by Woessner to accept the Park Board's recommendation and appoint Vern Benson, Sandy Irey, Sally Perrin and Allison Stengrim to the Park Board and to set the size of the Park Board to five members plus two students as youth advisory members. Motion amended to include the size of the Park Board. Motion passed unanimously.

Park Board is going to tour the parks to consider the placement of trees and park benches during April. They are working on a theme for River Park and will meet with the Library Board to discuss ideas for River Park.

The VFW Post 5252 submitted a request to the City to consider donating the land under the old Tourist Information Center back to the VFW. The VFW plans to use the building as a Veterans' Museum. Council authorized City Administrator Don Solga to check on legal expenses to transfer property to the VFW.

Motion by Waller, seconded by Woessner to approve transfer of Pelican Tobacco's cigarette license location from 414 N. Broadway to 25 1st Ave. NW. Motion passed unanimously.

Council discussed leadership training opportunity for Administrator Don Solga. Motion by Woessner, seconded by Waller to pay Administrator Don Solga salary and travel expenses while he attends the Blandin Leadership Training. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Woessner, seconded by Waller to transfer funds from Community Development, Fund 12 to Improvement Reserve Fund, Fund 2, in accordance with city policy for prior improvement projects. Motion passed unanimously.

The City Council was reminded about Special Meeting and Public Hearing for Improvement Project No. 70 on Tuesday, 04-05-05, at 7:00 p.m.

Council Member Woessner requested city staff to send a statement to the community's cable company expressing dissatisfaction that the citizens of this community were not offered the opportunity to watch the state basketball tournaments when other communities served by same cable company were able to watch the tournaments.

Meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Glenys Ehlert, CMC
Clerk-Treasurer