

December 19, 2023  
Jackson, Minnesota

The Jackson City council met in regular session in the Council Chambers of City Hall and also by Teleconference and Zoom at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 19, 2023 with the meeting called to order by Mayor Marcus Polz. On the roll call, the following persons were present in-person, Mayor Marcus Polz, Alderwoman Sara Mix and Aldermen Mark Titus, Chris Naumann, Brandon Finck and Joe Pell. Also attending in-person were City Administrator Matt Skaret, City Attorney Brad Anderson, Public Works Director Tony Oxborough, Jackson Fire Chief Dave Bond, Engineer Troy Nemmers of Bolton and Menk, Engineer Eric Hanson of HDR, John Weland of the Jackson County Animal Protection Society, Luke Ewald of Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services, Dave and Pamala Pronk, Emily Blaskey, Dennis Bertram, Galen Kaufmann, Josiah Bargaen, Bridget Kolander-Gilbert, City Clerk/Council Secretary Dave Maschoff and Joshua Schuetz of the Jackson County Pilot. Attending the meeting via Zoom and Teleconference was Mathew Grisham of KKOJ/KUXX Radio. (Alderman Nathan Peterson was absent.) (A quorum of the City Council was present.)

#### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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Mayor Polz announced the Pledge of Allegiance would be recited before the City Council meeting was called to order. All those attending in-person and by Zoom and Teleconference recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER**

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Mayor Polz called the regular meeting of the Jackson City Council to order. He said the roll call showed all Councilmembers were present except Alderman Nathan Peterson who was absent.

## **TRUTH IN TAXATION PUBLIC HEARING**

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Mayor Polz entertained a motion to open the Truth in Taxation Public Hearing.

**FINCK/TITUS moved and it was unanimously carried to open the Truth in Taxation Public Hearing at 6:30 p.m.**

Mayor Polz said the Truth in Taxation Public Hearing was now open.

City Administrator Matt Skaret explained this is the public hearing on the final tax levy that the City Council is scheduled to approve later in the Council meeting. He said the City's Truth in Taxation Public Hearing was noticed in the tax statements mailed out by the Jackson County Assessor's Office.

Skaret noted the City Council set their Preliminary Tax Levy back in September of \$2 million which is a 12.45 percent increase over last year. He said the City Council will be approving the final tax levy later in the Council meeting.

Skaret said the driving forces behind the increase in the tax levy includes adding new levies that the City hasn't levied for in the past. He said those new levies include the Little Huskies Daycare with both an operating levy and a building levy. Skaret said it's assuming that there might be a purchase of the building by the City at some point next year and also an operating subsidy. He said another new levy is a levy for nuisance abatement and the addition of a new levy to start to apply funds for pool improvements. Skaret said there is also a new levy for the ambulance. He said those new levies are really the driving factors for the increase in the City's tax levy.

Skaret said the increase for the City's general operations is about \$40,000. He said about two-and-a-half percent of the levy is actually for City operating expenses.

Mayor Polz asked if there was anyone in the Council Chambers that had any questions about the City's tax levy.

Pamala Pronk said she and her husband, Dave, live on West Street near the water tower. She said an over 12 percent increase in the City's tax levy for retired citizens in this community is a little rough. Pronk said their property taxes alone in the last two years with the City's new taxes is up \$500. She repeated \$500. Pronk said she doesn't get that kind of increase in her Social Security. She said things have not improved in her neighborhood at all. Pronk said they have the college right across the street from them, they have bumpy enough roads, they have lots of screeching tires and garbage.

Pronk said the water pressure at their residence is “oh my god awful”. She said for anybody that lives up on West Street, you could probably urinate with more pressure than what comes out of her shower in the morning. Pronk said the City is aware of the low water pressure because she’s had the Water Department come to her house for other services in the past. Pronk said she asked the Water Department about the low water pressure and was told that through the West Street neighborhood it’s pretty bad.

Pronk said every time the City adds a new housing subdivision and adds more apartments, the water pressure at their house goes down and down. She said it’s not getting any better, but their taxes are getting to the point, where the City is going to push them off onto welfare and their house is paid for.

Pronk asked the Mayor and City Council to please, somehow, can the City Council please consider the older generation that worked long and cheap and hard and they paid off their houses. She said the City is forcing them out of their house with these inflated housing prices. Pronk said her house isn’t worth that much and even if it was, she wouldn’t have the money to improve it. She asked Mayor Polz and Councilmembers to please consider that.

Mayor Polz noted the valuations of property in Jackson are set by the Jackson County Assessor’s Office. He said the City will hold their Board of Appeals and Equalization meeting in April. Mayor Polz said Pronk is welcome to attend that meeting and refer her valuation rate to the County Assessor’s staff.

Pronk asked if she could be contacted about when that meeting will be held.

Mayor Polz explained the time and date of the Local Board of Review meeting will be printed on the tax notification mailed out by the County Assessor’s Office. He said Pronk may attend the meeting and can make the argument to the Assessor’s Office staff to adjust her property tax rates.

Mayor Polz asked Skaret as far as the City’s portion, what does that equate to per \$100,000 for the tax increase.

Skaret said the City’s tax rate is about flat due to the fact the pie got bigger because the valuations went up. He said the valuations are set by the County Assessor which are based on comparable home sales.

Finck asked Pronk if the \$500 increase in her property taxes is the total over two years.

Pronk said their property taxes went up \$300 last year and now another \$200 property tax increase is being proposed.

Finck asked Pronk if the \$500 increase was the total or just the City's portion of property tax increase.

Pronk said that was the total increase.

Finck explained most of that increase will be due to the County and School District's portions which the City doesn't control.

Pronk said the City needs to control the increase. She said the increases are ridiculous.

Finck said the County has a Board that sets the levy.

Pronk asked but doesn't our City fight for us? She said we live here, we're the people.

Mayor Polz said the City doesn't have that jurisdiction.

Finck said the City Council tries to keep the City's taxes as low as they can. He noted his property taxes went up substantially because of valuation and the levy increase of where he's located because of the property sales in that area. Finck said his property taxes have gone up a couple thousand dollars.

Pronk said that's terrible.

Finck said it is terrible. He said a lot of the increase is the County and School District portions. Finck said the City's portion of his increase is about \$300. He said he would be just curious to see which of the three entities is affecting Pronk's increase the most. Finck said maybe it's all the City. He said he doesn't know what Pronk's tax statement looks like. Finck suggested Pronk take a look at her tax statement. He said the City can affect part of the tax statement, but not all of it.

Mayor Polz said it's his understanding that although the City has the 12.4 percent levy increase, that doesn't translate to property taxes increasing by 12.4 percent because the pie got bigger. He said if a person has a house that's valued at \$100,000, the City's portion of the property taxes may have increased \$20.

Pronk said she and her husband have lived in their house for many years and it's paid for. She said the increase in her property taxes is crazy. Pronk said it's certainly isn't getting any better.

Mayor Polz noted the County Assessor's Office sets the property valuations. Finck noted the Board of Appeal and Equalization meetings that will be held by the County, City and School District this spring.

Mayor Polz said he hears Pronk and shares her concern about the increased property taxes. He encouraged Pronk to attend the Board of Appeal and Equalization meetings.

Pronk thanked Mayor Polz and Councilmembers.

Mayor Polz asked if there was anyone else who wanted to speak. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to close the Truth in Taxation Public Hearing.

**MIX/PELL moved and it was unanimously carried to close the Truth in Taxation Public Hearing at 6:42 p.m.**

**There were no Bid Lettings or Open Forum.**

### **Unscheduled Guests:**

Mayor Polz asked if there were any unscheduled guests in the Council Chambers.

Mayor Polz again asked if there were any unscheduled guests in the Council Chambers.

Mayor Polz asked for a third time if there were any unscheduled guests in the audience.

Seeing and hearing no unscheduled guests, Mayor Polz said the Council would move onto the Consent Agenda.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

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Mayor Polz entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Mix referred to Consent Agenda Item 7(I) regarding the Finance Committee's 2024 Annual Appropriations recommendations. Mix noted she would like to see the recommendations to appropriate \$1,000 to PAWS (Precious Animals Worth Saving) and \$1,000 to JCAPS (Jackson County Animal Protection Society) removed from the appropriations so the City can plan for a long-term solution on how the City is going to handle stray animals going forward.

Since the City is looking to establish their own animal holding facility, Mix said she thinks the City needs a long-term plan about what they're going to do and potentially look to streamline to one provider going forward. She said she would like to remove the \$1,000 appropriation each to PAWS and JCAPS for 2024 as the City looks at that in more detail.

Mayor Polz noted the City Council needs to approve the 2024 City Budget as is.

Finck asked Mix if the City Council could approve the City Budget as is, but not allocate the funds in order to have the Animal Committee review plans going forward.

Mix said that would be great. She said she would like to see a little bit more time available to look into plans for the long-term.

Finck said the 2024 City Budget could be approved subject to having the \$1,000 appropriations each to PAWS and JCAPS reviewed by the Animal Committee.

For background information, Skaret said the Animal Committee is working on building an animal shelter. He said the plan is to have that done in 2024. Skaret said it's anticipated there would be a non-profit organization helping to staff the animal shelter. He said that organization could potentially be JCAPS or whoever. Skaret said not all the details have been worked out yet regarding staffing. He said until that animal shelter is built, the City does need to have this temporary arrangement with PAWS and JCAPS.

Mix said she doesn't know if both organizations are needed and the City needs to work on their plan on what they're going to do in the future and develop that.

**MIX/PELL moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the Consent Agenda as presented with the exception of sending the proposed PAWS and JCAPS \$1,000 reimbursements each for the spaying and neutering of animals back to the Animal Committee for further review.**

## **Council Discussion Items**

### **PLAQUE PRESENTATIONS TO THE 2023 OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION RECIPIENTS**

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Mayor Polz congratulated the 2023 Outstanding Volunteer Recognition recipients.

#### **Emily Blaskey**

Mayor Polz said the Youth Award recipient is Emily Blaskey. He noted Blaskey has been an active Key Club member throughout her High School career. Mayor Polz said Blaskey currently serves as the Key Club President and does a great job in representing the Key Club. He said Blaskey is also involved in many activities such as Band, Student Council and Key Club. Mayor Polz said she loves helping others and has been a very active Key Club member.

#### **John Weland**

Mayor Polz announced the 2023 Individual Award winner is John Weland. He said Weland has been involved with the Animal Welfare Committee and has been a member since 2019 of the Jackson County Animal Protection Society. Mayor Polz said Weland is a strong advocate for the future animal shelter as well as ensuring animal well-being is first and foremost.

Mayor Polz noted Weland has also been an active participant in the newly formed Jackson Senior Advisory Committee. He said Weland has put in over 100 hours of volunteer time into building the new Jackson Community Gardens in Zimmerli Park and being a co-founder of the “Green Thumb Club”

Mayor Polz said Weland participates in the monthly Jackson Park Board meetings to provide guidance on the new Jackson Dog Park, among other projects Park Board members come up with to improve the City’s greenspaces. He said Weland is also serving on the City’s newly formed Nuisance Committee and also serves as a member of the Jackson Technology Committee.

Mayor Polz said Weland in general has been a great all-around volunteer.

## **Dennis Bertram**

Mayor Polz said the Senior Citizen Volunteer of the Year is Dennis Bertram. He said Bertram is always a person to step in and grab the bull by the horns and do things.

Mayor Polz said Bertram has played an instrumental role as an impact volunteer in Rebuilding Together Southwest Minnesota.

Mayor Polz said Bertram is involved with the development and implementation of the Safe at Home Kits which includes the installation of smoke detectors, non-slip pads, dawn to dusk lightbulbs, foldable grabbers, mini flashlights, fire extinguishers, fall prevention resources, emergency contact sheets, reusable masks along with other items.

Mayor Polz said Bertram is also involved with the Safe at Home Program which provides home safety and fall prevention modifications and ramps for older adults or those living with a disability so they can continue to live safely and independently in their own homes. He noted on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Bertram put together a volunteer team to repair a ramp, an awning, porch lattice and did painting for a 95-year-old senior citizen in Jackson.

Mayor Polz also noted Bertram's involvement in Rebuilding Together Days in Jackson. He said Bertram put in 247 volunteer hours for the Jackson Rebuilding Day leading up to June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 and also taking on a project on September 9, 2023 with a smaller group of people. Mayor Polz said there were six homes worked on in Jackson for this inaugural event with several additional homes evaluated by Bertram for future "R-Day" events. He said the evaluation included the type of equipment needed, working with Boekett Lumber, Ace Hardware, local contractors and other volunteers to make the event become a reality and was really an impressive venture for the community.

Mayor Polz congratulated Bertram, Weland and Blaskey. He said their volunteer work was appreciated. That was followed by a round of applause from those attending the City Council meeting.

Mayor Polz presented plaques to each of the recipients recognizing their volunteerism followed by photographs of the Mayor, Blaskey, Weland and Bertram with their plaques.



## **BRIDGET KOLANDER GILBERT – WINTERTIME EVENT FOR SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 2024**

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Bridget Kolander Gilbert explained on Saturday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, she would like to create an event called “Beat the Blizzard Blues” and have it as a street event.

Kolander-Gilbert requested closing a block of Sherman Street from Second Street (Main Street) to First Street. She said with the street closure, she would like to promote and encourage people to bring their ice-houses to park on the street. Kolander-Gilbert said she is looking for about six to eight participants to create a competition to determine who has the best ice-house. She said participants can have a theme or decorate their ice-house for the competition. Kolander-Gilbert said she thinks it will be a fun event to showcase those ice-houses and have them judged.

Kolander-Gilbert said she has spoken with Jackson County Sheriff Shawn Haken, who has given his approval for the event. She asked Mayor Polz and the Council if she could also have a firepit in the center of the street.

Kolander-Gilbert also requested permission to have alcohol on the street within the closed off block of Sherman Street in front of her business. She said she would like to have her event on Saturday, January 20<sup>th</sup> from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. In addition to that, Kolander-Gilbert also asked if ice-house participants could leave their ice-houses on the street until at least 9 o’clock Sunday morning just because it will be dark Saturday night when the event is over.

Mix asked Fire Chief Dave Bond if it would be safe for Kolander-Gilbert to have a fire pit in the middle of the street.

Bond said as long as it’s a controlled burn and contained, there shouldn’t be any issue.

Skaret asked if there was any chance there could be damage to the pavement from the firepit.

Kolander-Gilbert said she didn’t know because she’s never had a firepit on the street before. She said she would have to check with Public Works Director Tony Oxborough.

Finck suggested Kolander-Gilbert work with Oxborough. He said he anticipates as long as it’s a raised firepit, there should be no problem. Finck noted typically residents who use raised firepits in their driveways and have something underneath them to reflect the heat have no problems.

**MIX/TITUS moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Bridget Kolander-Gilbert's request to close a block of Sherman Street from Second (Main) Street to First Street on Saturday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, allow alcohol on the closed block of Sherman Street from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m., allow fish houses to be parked on the closed block of Sherman Street from 4 p.m. Saturday, January 20<sup>th</sup> to 9 a.m. on Sunday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, work with Public Works Director Tony Oxborough regarding having a firepit on the street and allow for flexibility if the street needs to be cleared of snow.**

Mix said it's appreciated that Kolander-Gilbert continues to host events.

Kolander-Gilbert said hopefully the event can become an annual event.

Mayor Polz thanked Kolander-Gilbert.

Kolander-Gilbert thanked Mayor Polz and Councilmembers.

#### **AIRPORT RUNWAY PAPI CHANGE ORDER NO. 2**

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Engineer Eric Hanson of HDR was present to request a Change Order for the Airport Runway Project to add baffles to the north set of PAPI (Precision Approach Path Indicator) lights at the north end of the new runway.

Hanson provided an illustration to Mayor Polz and Councilmembers. He explained the Change Order to add baffles will block the L.E.D. lights in case a pilot cuts their approach to the airport very sharp and goes over the Meneely property located north of the airport. Hanson said the PAPI lights will remain out of service until the baffles are installed.

Hansen said the cost of the baffles is \$22,569 with the eligible cost to be split 90 percent by the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration), five percent by the State Transportation Aeronautics, and five percent local funds. He said the north set of the PAPI lights will need to be sent to the manufacturer to have the baffles installed.

**MIX/PELL moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Airport Runway PAPI Change Order No. 2 at a cost of \$22,569.**

#### **AIRPORT PAY APPLICATION NO. 4 TAXIWAY**

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Engineer Eric Hanson said Airport Pay Application No. 4 is in the amount of \$51,604 payable to Svoboda Excavating of Jackson.

Hanson said Pay Application No. 4 is payment for work completed through December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Mayor Polz asked for a motion to approve Airport Pay Application No. 4.

**NAUMANN/FINCK moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Airport Pay Application No. 4 in the amount of \$51,604 payable to Svoboda Excavating of Jackson, Minnesota.**

### **AIRPORT RUNWAY PAY APPLICATION NO. 9**

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Engineer Eric Hanson of HDR explained Airport Runway Pay Application No. 9 pertains to releasing the retainage being held on the construction of the main runway which amounts to \$243,511.75 payable to Svoboda Excavating in Jackson.

Hanson said approving Pay Application No. 9 will allow HDR to prepare the final closeout reports on the project. He noted once the project is closed out, the City will be reimbursed its final amounts. Hanson explained once the reimbursement reaches 90 percent, the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) and MnDOT (Minnesota Department of Transportation) cease reimbursements until the final closeout reports are submitted and approved. He pointed out this was a large grant and over \$400,000 in reimbursements is being held until the project close-out report is submitted.

**MIX/FINCK moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Airport Pay Application No. 9 in the amount of \$243,511.75 payable to Svoboda Excavating of Jackson, Minnesota.**

Mayor Polz thanked Hanson.

Hanson thanked Mayor Polz and Councilmembers.

### **TORGERSON LANE GRAVEL EXTENSION PAY ESTIMATE 2**

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Engineer Troy Nemmers of Bolton and Menk explained the work on the Torgerson Lane Gravel Extension Project to the electrical substation is substantially completed. He said there is some final seeding to do in the spring but otherwise everything else was completed this fall.

Nemmers said Pay Application No. 2 is in the amount of \$121,427.76 payable to R & J Enterprises of Mankato and covers all the work completed through November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Finck noted the City will be reimbursed 50 percent by I.T.C. for the cost of the Torgerson Lane Gravel Extension Project.

**PELL/NAUMANN moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Torgerson Lane Gravel Extension Pay Application No. 2 in the amount of \$121,427.76 payable to R & K Enterprises of Mankato, Minnesota.**

### **DOWNTOWN ALLEY IMPROVEMENTS PAY ESTIMATE 7**

Engineer Troy Nemmers of Bolton and Menk said Downtown Alley Improvements Project Pay Application No. 7 is payable to Jensen Excavating and Trucking in the amount of \$23,663.63. He said Pay Application No. 7 includes some final quantity adjustments that Bolton and Menk worked with the contractor on based on field notes and material tickets. He said it also reduces the retainage to 3 percent as the project is mostly complete.

**MIX/PELL moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Downtown Alley Improvements Pay Application No. 7 in the amount of \$23,663.63 payable to Jensen Excavating and Trucking of Albert Lea, Minnesota.**

Mayor Polz thanked Nemmers.

Nemmers thanked Mayor Polz.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 53-1223 SUPPORTING INDUSTRIAL PARKWAY CONNECTOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION GRANT APPLICATION**

Skaret explained the County is submitting, on the City's behalf, a grant application to install a proposed trail that would start where the current trail ends near the Liquor Store and go east towards Prospect Lane and then up to the south side of Industrial Parkway and go east all the way to AGCO. He said it's a big project. Skaret said it's been a goal of the Friends of the Jackson County Trails for a long time.

Skaret said the County is submitting the Grant Application because Jackson is a City of under 5,000 population so Jackson County has to be the City's sponsor. He said the City Council needs to submit a resolution of support. Skaret said the City submitted a pre-grant application which was due in November and approval was given to submit the final application which is due around January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

**NAUMANN/TITUS moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Resolution No. 53-1223 Supporting the Industrial Parkway Trail Connector Active Transportation Grant Program Application.**

**RESOLUTION NO. 57-1223 ACCEPTING TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION GRANT PROGRAM AGREEMENT**

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Skaret said Resolution No. 57-1223 pertains to the City's Patterson Park/Thomas Hill Sidewalk Project.

Skaret noted at their November 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, the City Council awarded the bid on the Patterson Park/Thomas Hill Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Grant Project to Nielsen Blacktopping of Mankato and the associated grant agreement. He noted at that time the City's local share for the project was anticipated to be \$23,708. However, since that time, Skaret said MnDOT (Minnesota Department of Transportation) has discovered that the City still has \$12,650.80 in funds left over from a 2017 Grant which was used for the Dewey Street Trail Connection. He said MnDOT plans on applying the \$12,650.80 to the Patterson Park/Thomas Hill Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project. Skaret said that would reduce the City's local share from \$23,708 down to \$11,057.42. He said in order to do that, another grant agreement is needed.

**FINCK/NAUMANN moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Resolution No. 57-1223 accepting terms and conditions of the Active Transportation Grant Program Agreement.**

**RESOLUTION NO. 58-1223 ACCEPTING LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA CITIES GRANT NAVIGATOR GRANT**

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Skaret explained Resolution No. 58-1223 is for the Local Road Improvement Program Grant that the City submitted a week ago for the proposed Keul Avenue Construction Project in the Industrial Park. He said the Keul Avenue Construction Project would connect Torgerson Lane and Prospect Lane.

Skaret said the League of Minnesota Cities has a grant program that would help reimburse the City for some of the costs associated with writing the grant application for \$5,000. He said the City received the grant and the City Council needs to approve Resolution No. 58-1223 accepting the grant. Skaret said he would recommend the City Council accept the grant.

**MIX/PELL moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Resolution No. 58-1223 accepting the League of Minnesota Cities Grant Navigator Grant.**

## **SECOND CONSIDERATION: ORDINANCE NO. 140 ADOPTING THE CITY'S FEES, RATES AND CHARGES FOR 2024**

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Skaret noted at the December 5<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting, there was discussion regarding the fees for mowing. He said Public Works Director Tony Oxborough contacted local contractors regarding their hourly mowing rates.

Skaret said Oxborough believes charging \$145 for residential is still an adequate deterrent for people from just relying on the City to mow their yards. He said there needs to be clarification that this is per hour with a minimum one-hour charge. Skaret said for non-residential properties, Oxborough recommends going to \$250 per hour with a one-hour minimum charge. He said those rates would not be anywhere close to competing with local lawn service contractors.

Mix suggested including basing the amount that's charged to mow residential and commercial properties on the number of times the City has to mow the property.

To Mix's point, Finck suggested for the first offense, there is the charge of \$145 for residential with a minimum one-hour charge and \$250 per hour with a one-hour minimum charge. He said the cost for a second offense would be doubled, third offense the charge would be tripled and beyond.

Mix noted there's a resident in her neighborhood that never mows their yard. She said these are repeat offenders that are relying on the City to maintain their business or residential lots. Mix said she thinks the City needs to deter it.

Skaret said it could be written into the City's fee ordinance that the price doubles everything the City has to mow the property.

Finck said he thinks the price should be doubled for repeat offenders. He said the Public Works Department has better things to do than mow yards. Finck said every time someone doesn't mow their yard after they've been notified and they're a repeat offender, the price is doubled.

Skaret said for a first-time offense, the price would be \$145 for residential mowing, the price for a second offense would be \$290 and a third time would be \$580.

Finck said it would be less expensive for someone to get on the schedule of the local mowing contractors than to pay the extra costs for the City to mow. Finck said he's more concerned about mowing the commercial properties because that's not good use of the Public Works Department's time.

Titus asked if the City has active surveillance regarding the height of grass on residential and commercial properties.

Oxborough said some of the City office people have gone out to look at properties. He said Parks Supervisor Neal Carlson and other City personnel also look for properties that are overgrown. Oxborough said Carlson is the person who has taken care of mowing unkept yards.

Skaret said it's typically the same people year after year that are the repeat offenders in not mowing their yards. He said 80 percent are repeat offenders and 20 percent are oddball situations where someone was gone, it rained, the grass flourished and the people didn't return soon enough from vacation to mow their lawn.

Titus asked if it's City staff that's doing the surveillance or is it the result of citizen complaints or both.

Oxborough said the driving factor for mowing lawns is absolutely due to citizens' complaints.

Skaret said determining whether a property has to be mowed is when it's blatantly obvious.

Naumann asked how many offenders there are during a season that need to have their yard mowed?

Skaret said over the course of the year, there are probably 60 or 70 properties on the list.

Pell asked what if the penalties are increased, but aren't paid?

Skaret said in those cases, the costs are certified to the owner's property taxes.

Titus said his concern is that the rules regarding mowing are applied fairly across the community where it's not hit and miss and one part of town is mowed and another lot in town has four-foot-tall Canadian thistles that people look at for weeks or months and nothing happens. He said his concern is the fairness, especially if the City is going to double or triple the fine.

Mix said she thinks the City has done a pretty good job keeping up on overgrown properties.

Finck said there also has to be a little bit of discretion left up to Oxborough and his crew on whether there's a true complaint or not.

Oxborough said he's spoken with property owners in the past who have taken care of thistles and overgrown grass and the City hasn't had to mow.

Skaret noted Ordinance No. 140 also includes increases in the water and sewer rates. He said the Utilities Commission reviewed those rates at their meeting on December 18<sup>th</sup> and recommended approval.

Skaret said Ordinance No. 140 also adds the senior citizen discount for Senior Center rentals of a reduced rate of \$25 per day. He said there were also some updates to equipment rates and fees that Oxborough had recommended.

**MIX/PELL moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Second Consideration of Ordinance No. 140 Adopting the City's Fees, Rates and Charges for 2024 with the update of having the mowing fees doubled for each violation.**

## **RESOLUTION NO. 55-1223 APPROVING A FINAL TAX LEVY FOR TAXES COLLECTIBLE IN 2024**

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Skaret said the City Council needs to set the final tax levy for taxes collectible in 2024 by December 28<sup>th</sup>. He said the City Council set the Preliminary Tax Levy back in September at \$2 million which was basically an increase of 12.45 percent over this past year.

Skaret said it sounds like a lot, but if you look at the big picture, Jackson's total Taxable Market Value grew from \$237,777,700 to 273,328,900, a 14.95 percent increase. He said while this may seem high, keep in mind the City's tax rate is currently 62.216 percent. Skaret noted with this increase, it's projected to be 65.576 percent. He said in 2022, it was just over 67 percent. Skaret said the reason being the City's Total Market Valuation continues to grow with increases in property valuations due to comparable sales and new construction.



Skaret said the City's overall tax rate is actually going to stay about the same, the rate that property owners are taxed on. He said it's just the valuations go up so therefore the property taxes go up.

Mayor Polz noted there is a benefit for new construction because it adds to the tax base to make the pie bigger.

Mayor Polz asked for a motion to approve Resolution No. 55-1223.

**TITUS/FINCK moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Resolution No. 55-1223 approving a Final Tax Levy for Taxes Collectible in 2024.**

### **RESOLUTION NO. 56-1223 APPROVING THE 2024 GENERAL FUND BUDGET**

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Skaret said the Finance Committee met and has reviewed the 2024 General Fund Budget multiple times. He noted the budget does include a \$100,000 split between building a new warming house and then taking the old warming house and retrofitting that into an animal shelter. Skaret said the goal is to get that completed in 2024.

Skaret said there are some potential grants available particularly for the construction of the ice rink warming house. He said some DNR grants may be available for that project. Skaret said a grant application has also been submitted to the Jackson Healthcare Foundation for the warming house project. He said the City is hopeful there will be a grant from the Healthcare Foundation to go towards the construction of the ice rink warming house.

Skaret said the other notable items include incorporating the wage increases that were approved as part of the Union contract and the health insurance changes. He said there's been some shifting of wages between the Public Works Director and the new Assistant Position that the City added.

Skaret said the Park Board continues to be aggressive in updating the City's parks. He also noted the Park Board's efforts in doing some more development in Memorial Park. Skaret said in addition to constructing a new warming house for the ice rink, plans also include constructing a shelter house that's a little be more upscale and can be rented out for events.

Skaret said those are the highlights of the 2024 City Budget. He said there's not really a lot of cushion in the budget. Skaret said the Finance Committee has thought very carefully about the larger items in the budget.

Skaret said normally the Finance Committee likes to lower the Final Levy from the Preliminary Levy, but after reviewing the budget over and over, there really isn't a lot of cushion in the budget to cut without sacrificing key priorities.

Skaret said overall, the full General Fund Budget is just over \$4.1 million.

Naumann said he thinks the City Councilmembers have a lot of things coming up on their plate that they all want to do and continue to move the City along. But Naumann said Councilmembers have to be very careful on what they're doing and what they're getting into. He noted information from Skaret on how low the City's reserve funds are. Naumann said the Council needs to be cautious of that as it continues to push for housing, push for roads, push for a water pump and all the other fantastic things that the City is doing, just to be cautious. Naumann said for him, it's a good reminder to do that.

**TITUS/MIX moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Resolution No. 56-1223 approving the 2024 General Fund Budget.**

## **2024 LOCAL BOARD OF APPEAL AND EQUALIZATION TRAINING**

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Skaret said the City's Local Board of Review meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. He said at least one Councilmember needs to be certified. Skaret said currently, only Mayor Polz is certified. He said it would be nice to have one or two more Councilmembers certified as backups. Skaret said the training is available online and must be completed by February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

Mayor Polz said it's important to have some other Councilmembers certified.

Skaret said the online training takes about an hour.

Mix asked Skaret if he could send information to the Councilmembers on what they need to do to get certified.

Skaret said he could send out the information to Councilmembers.

Skaret noted this agenda item was informational.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING QUARTERLY REVIEW REPORT FOR DECEMBER 6, 2023**

Skaret said the Strategic Planning Quarterly Review Report is an informational item for the Mayor and Councilmembers. He said the report was compiled by Strategic Planning Facilitator Marcy Douglas from the Planning Session that was held on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

### **Other:**

#### **Alderwoman Sara Mix**

Alderwoman Sara Mix asked if there was any update regarding the former Prairie Winds Motel building.

City Attorney Brad Anderson said December 28<sup>th</sup> is a Court deadline for the owner of the property to file an appeal.

Mix asked about an update on the former Coast to Coast building.

Attorney Anderson said the property owner's attorney has been ill and there were no new updates at this time.

#### **City Administrator Matt Skaret**

City Administrator Matt Skaret reminded Mayor Polz and Councilmembers that there's a Special City Council meeting on Thursday evening, December 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30 p.m. He said it should be a very short meeting.

Skaret explained the primary purpose of the Special meeting is to appoint a part-time assistant for the Economic Development Office. He said the Council will also consider quotes for radios for the Ambulance and Fire Departments which is being paid for with the Public Safety Aid which is coming from the State. Skaret said the Public Safety Aid is one time money from the State.

Skaret said following the Special City Council meeting, will be a Pool Task Force meeting in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mix noted she would not be able to attend the Special City Council meeting on December 21<sup>st</sup>.

## **City Attorney Brad Anderson**

City Attorney Brad Anderson said he just wanted to wish everybody a Merry Christmas for all, and all a good night.

Mayor Polz thanked Attorney Anderson.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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**With no further business, Mix/Pell moved and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the Jackson City Council meeting at 7:34 p.m.**

Mayor Polz said the City Council meeting was now adjourned.

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**David A. Maschoff, Council Secretary**

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**Marcus Polz, Mayor**



