

July 2, 2024
Jackson, Minnesota

The Jackson City Council met in regular session in the Council Chambers of City Hall and also by Teleconference and Zoom at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 2, 2024 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, Nathan Peterson and Joe Pell. Also attending in-person were Interim City Administrator and Public Works Director Tony Oxborough, City Attorney Brad Anderson, MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Tony Nitchals, Jackson Ambulance Director Grant Landbo, Engineer Troy Nemmers of Bolton and Menk, John Weland of the Jackson County Animal Protection Society, Luke Ewald of Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services, Phil Markman and Jared Spaeth of the Public Works Department, Clay Welchlin of the City Electric Department, Paul Hargus, Kirk Dunlavey, Pastor John Schuetz of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Jackson, City Clerk/Council Secretary Dave Maschoff, Justin Lessman of the Jackson County Pilot and Matt Grisham of KKOJ/KUXX Radio. Joining the meeting via Zoom and Teleconference was Jackson City Administrator Shelley Oltmans and Jackson Economic Development Director Wendy Anderson. (Alderman Brandon Finck was absent.) (A quorum of the City Council was present.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

There were no Public Hearings, 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

Mayor Polz entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

PETERSON/TITUS moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Council Discussion Items

PROPOSED ADOPTION OF SEPARATION AGREEMENT AND RELEASE AND WAIVER OF ALL CLAIMS WITH SHELLEY OLTMANS

Mayor Polz entertained a motion regarding the proposed adoption of the Separation Agreement and Release and Waiver of all Claims with Shelley Oltmans.

MIX/PETERSON moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the proposed adoption of the Separation Agreement and Release and Waiver of all Claims with Shelley Oltmans.

RESOLUTION APPOINTING TONY OXBOROUGH AS THE ACTING CITY ADMINISTRATOR COMMENCING ON JUNE 28, 2024 UNTIL WHICH TIME THE CITY HAS AN ONSITE INTERIM CITY ADMINISTRATOR

Mayor Polz asked for a motion on a Resolution appointing Tony Oxborough as the Acting City Administrator commencing on June 28, 2024 until which time the City has an onsite Interim City Administrator.

MIX/PETERSON moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the Resolution appointing Tony Oxborough as the Acting City Administrator commencing on June 28, 2024 until which time the City has an onsite Interim City Administrator.

PROPOSED ADOPTION OF PROPOSAL FOR INTERIM CITY MANAGEMENT SERVICES STARTING ON JULY 9, 2024

Mayor Polz entertained a motion regarding the proposed adoption of the proposal for Interim City Management Services starting on July 9, 2024.

PETERSON/MIX moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the adoption of the proposal for Interim City Management Services starting on July 9, 2024.

RICK REED – REQUEST FOR BLOCK PARTY WITH A BAND IN THEIR BACKYARD AT 113 POND DRIVE ON SATURDAY, JULY 13, 2024 FROM 8 P.M. TO 12 A.M.

Mayor Polz said Rick Reed made a request to host a block party with a band in the Reed's backyard at 113 Pond Drive on Saturday, July 13th, 2024 from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m. He said Reed has been hosting a block party at his house annually for a number of years, and to his knowledge, there's never been any issues. Mayor Polz said it's just a good event.

Mayor Polz entertained a motion.

PETERSON/TITUS moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the request from Rick Reed to allow a Block Party with a band in the Reed's backyard at 113 Pond Drive on Saturday, July 13, 2024 from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m.

PAY ESTIMATE NO. 9 FOR THE 2022 STREET IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

Engineer Troy Nemmers of Bolton and Menk explained Pay Estimate No. 9 is for the 2022 Street Improvements Project. He said Bolton and Menk is working with the contractor to finish up the final “punch list” items. Nemmers said a final Pay Estimate for the project will be submitted later this summer.

Nemmers said Pay Estimate No. 9 for the 2022 Street Improvements Project is in the amount of \$49,086.44 payable to Duininck, Incorporated.

MIX/NAUMANN moved and it was unanimously carried to approve Pay Estimate No. 9 for the 2022 Streets Improvements Project in the amount of \$49,086.44 payable to Duininck, Incorporated.

On another note, Nemmers said he knows that transition of City staffing is a challenge.

Nemmers said he has served as Acting City Administrator on two different occasions when he worked for the City of Fairmont. He said if the Mayor, Councilmembers or Oxborough have any questions or want to bounce around ideas, to please feel free to reach out to him. Nemmers said he’s here to help the City through this.

Mayor Polz said he appreciated that.

POOL SURVEY

Alderman Joe Pell noted copies of the proposed Pool Survey were distributed to the Mayor and Councilmembers before the Council meeting. He asked if anyone had any questions regarding the proposed survey.

Pell said the Pool Task Force is going to meet as a group on Monday, July 8th to review the proposed survey and hopefully finalize it. He said the next steps will be to basically approve the survey and then the pool survey will be finalized by July 22nd. Pell said the survey will then be sent to be proof-read and reviewed. He said it takes three weeks to print the survey and mail it to patrons.

Pell said August 26th is the deadline for the surveys to be mailed back by patrons. He said it will take School Perceptions about two weeks to create their reports regarding the pool survey results. Pell said a presentation of the results will be held on September 16th. He said a decision will be made regarding the pool after that.

Mayor Polz noted this agenda item was informational and no Council action was necessary.

Peterson said to contact himself, Pell or Titus if Councilmembers had any questions about the pool survey prior to the July 8th Pool Task Force meeting.

DESIGNATE A COMMUNITY FESTIVAL FOR THE JULY 11TH, 2024 CRUISE-IN EVENT

Mayor Polz entertained a motion to designate a Community Festival for the July 11th, 2024 Cruise-In event in Jackson.

MIX/PELL moved and it was unanimously carried to designate a Community Festival for the July 11th, 2024 Cruise-In Event.

CONTRACTING FOR ELECTRICAL INSPECTION SERVICES

City Clerk Dave Maschoff explained a form was sent to the Mayor and all the Councilmembers that he and MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Tony Nitchals had discussed prior to the Council meeting.

Maschoff said with all the flooding that's occurred, there's been discussion that if a house was flooded, that an electrical inspector should look at the electrical system in the house and sign-off on it before electric power is restored.

Maschoff said there is a form for the homeowner and the electrical inspector to fill out before power is restored to a house.

Nitchals said at this time all residents who were flooded and requested to have their electric power shut off need to have a licensed electrician or inspector come in and inspect the electrical system so the home's electric system is deemed safe. He said the Electric Department doesn't want to see anymore damage done than what has already occurred.

Nitchals said he's been asked many times if the City would be paying for the electrical inspections. He said he's informed homeowners that at this time, the City is not paying for the inspections and it's the responsibility of the homeowner. Nitchals said some homeowners were quite upset saying they already have this much damage and now they will have that much more cost on top of everything. He said there was some discussion about the City maybe splitting the cost for inspections 50/50 to do something to help out these residents that have flood issues.

Mix asked how many houses were affected by flooding.

Nitchals said the Electric Department shut power off to 18 houses. He said they are now down to 11 houses having their electric power being off. Nitchals said three of the homeowners had an electrician inspect their home and were told they could not re-energize their homes until repairs are made. Nitchals said there are 11 property owners who haven't made a decision yet on what they're going to do.

Mix said she personally thinks it's the right thing to do, but she understands that electricians are expensive and noted cases where a property owner has lost everything. She asked if the City has reached out to any of the support networks the City has had for the flooding to see if there's any funds available for anyone that might be struggling. Mix asked if there were any FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) or State programs that could help.

Nitchals said he has mentioned to property owners to check their homeowner's insurance.

Mayor Polz said assistance for individuals is a very complicated question. He said regarding FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), currently in the State of Minnesota in our region, individuals are not eligible for individual aid at this time. He said it's his understanding that could change.

Mayor Polz said the City has reached out to legislators. He said after the tornadoes struck Comfrey and St. Peter, there was a lot of financial aid that became available to businesses and such for rebuilding and reconstruction. Mayor Polz said he has asked legislators about financial aid for individuals as well, but has not received any information yet.

Mayor Polz said there's also been some discussions about opportunities for fundraising that would be available to help assist individuals. He said some of the ideas have included T-Shirt sales, fundraising and things like that going towards relief efforts that may help individuals in scenarios like this. Mayor Polz said there's not a clear-cut answer as of July 2nd, other than the City wants to help but the right way to do so has yet to be identified. He said he doesn't have all the answers yet regarding assistance for businesses and individuals, but the City wants to help and they're looking at options.

Mayor Polz said his hope is that legislators will provide information about potential opportunities for resources or funding as well as FEMA funding. He said hopefully the City has the opportunity to get some relief for individuals.

RECAP OF FLOODING IN JACKSON

Mayor Polz said Public Works Director Tony Oxborough, MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Tony Nitchals and Electric Department employee Clay Welchlin were extremely instrumental in the flood efforts in Jackson.

Oxborough said there were a lot of people that were involved with the efforts regarding the flooding. Oxborough said Friday, before the high waters arrived, the Public Works Department did flood preparations. He said they met with Jackson County Emergency Management Director Gary Reif and County officials. At that time, Oxborough said the prediction was that the river crest was going to occur in Jackson on Thursday afternoon, June 27th. He said preparations were made on Friday, June 21st for the anticipated higher water that would be flowing down the Des Moines River.

Oxborough said a heavy rainstorm came through the area and the Water Department personnel were summoned around 10 p.m. on June 21st. He said the lift stations couldn't keep up. Oxborough said Water Department personnel stayed on duty until 1 a.m. Saturday, June 22nd.

Oxborough said Jared Spaeth from the Street Department came into work at 3 a.m. on June 22nd and started helping and the Water Department shut off the gate valve that shuts off the water between Albertus Field and Dan's Island to stop Dan's Island from filling up with water and getting pumps going.

Oxborough said the entire Water Department crew was working early Saturday morning and the entire Street Department crew came in around 7 a.m. on Saturday, June 22nd. He said volunteers started coming in and sandbagging.

Oxborough said during the day on Saturday, crews felt more and more comfortable thinking crews could come back on Sunday and sandbagging volunteers were sent home around 1 p.m. on Saturday, June 22nd. He said sandbags were added to various locations, but the water kept coming up. Oxborough said sandbagging volunteers were then called back for a shift on Saturday evening.

Oxborough said a very important meeting was held around 5 p.m. on Saturday, June 22nd where officials in Jackson were told that the information they were basing decisions on regarding the amount of water expected was bad information. He said they were told some of the probes measuring the depth of the water up stream in the Des Moines River were below the water and not providing accurate readings. Oxborough said those readings take into account the rain, the flow of the river and everything like that. He said Jackson officials were told they needed to do everything within their power to put something in the way of the water. Oxborough said he was thankful that everyone that was called to come and help showed up with no questions. He said he called Jackson County crews to help and the first priority was getting material and clay to put in the way of the water at the end of First Street which is the lowest point in downtown Jackson. Oxborough said he called Svoboda Excavating and Svoboda Excavating, the City and County worked to haul material to the end of First Street.

Oxborough said as the night progressed, there were a ton of volunteers that helped at the Water Plant. He said the inertial of the water came over across the dike at Dan's Island and the Kawasaki Shop and up the storm sewers, which had been plugged, but the storm sewer catch basin failed so water came up and eventually came across Highway 71 and filled in that area. He said it was a "soul-crushing" night on Saturday, June 22nd. Oxborough said crews did the best they could. He said everything was flooded at this point.

Oxborough said Jared Spaeth was called around 3 or 4 a.m. on Sunday, June 23rd that the levy had broke on the bayou, the location of the former skating rink, and that houses were being evacuated. He said the Sheriff's Office took care of evacuating people from their homes. Oxborough said he and Spaeth used a loader to help get some people out of their homes or retrieve personal items and some dogs. He said he believes three trips were made with the loader to get people out of their homes.

On Sunday morning, Oxborough said volunteers and all City resources and staff were sent to the Water Plant to get the pump room diked. He said crews used kayaks and moved seven sandbags at a time to get the sandbags to the Water Plant's loading dock, walk them through the Water Plant and through the flooded shop area to dike the Water Plant's pump room. Oxborough explained there were multiple layers of what needed to be accomplished in order to keep the Water Plant alive. He said there was the electric behind the Water Plant that potentially could get wet and there was the transfer switch and emergency back-up power switch transformer that needed to be protected. Oxborough explained the City's well that water is pumped out of is also back there plus the pump room itself. He said staff did an awesome job. Oxborough said they were able to pump the water down in the pump room and keep the Water Plant operating.

Oxborough noted the City Council declared a State of Emergency at a Special City Council meeting on Saturday, June 22nd. He noted having the State Emergency Management Team in Jackson on Sunday, June 23rd to help with the flood efforts.

Oxborough explained how the accordion sandbags were used to stop the flow of water from coming across Highway 71 to the grocery store. He said Svoboda Excavating did an excellent job in assisting. Oxborough said while Svoboda Excavating was putting the accordion sandbags in place, the Street Department personnel were building dikes at various locations. He said things were moving in the right direction as of Monday, June 24th.

Oxborough said on Tuesday, June 25th, crews finished working on dikes. He said the water peaked between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m. on Wednesday, June 26th. Oxborough said from that point, crews basically moved pumps around to various locations.

Oxborough thanked all the volunteers and contractors who helped with the flood efforts. He said so many good people showed up to help. Oxborough said the City was only successful because of the amount of people that showed up to help.

MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Tony Nitchals reported the Electric Department helped wherever they could. He said they had one issue and that was the Dan's Island switch which will be remedied. Nitchals said it was thought that the berm around that switch was constructed high enough, but it flooded and the switch was lost at 12:54 a.m. He said there was a power outage but all customers were back-fed with electricity and power was restored to customers in about 45 minutes.

Clay Welchlin said the Electric Department did what they had to do and helped out where they needed to.

Jackson Ambulance Director Grant Landbo thanked all the volunteers for their support. He said there were over 1,000 people that volunteered and filled over 20,000 sandbags. Landbo said the City is very lucky with the resources that Jackson has. He noted the clay that was available from the TV Tower hill. Landbo said the City didn't buy TV Tower hill in case there was a flood but it helped having clay a thousand feet from where it was needed to control the flood. He said it helped having Svoboda Excavating here in Jackson that dropped everything to come help. Landbo said there were a lot of resources that Jackson had that their neighbors did not have by chance.

Mayor Polz asked EDA Administrative Assistant Shelley Pohlman if she had any updates regarding downtown businesses that were flooded.

Pohlman reported she and EDA Director Wendy Anderson are working with local businesses in trying to gather and assess damage from the flood. She said they are creating a spreadsheet and trying to get that to conform to what Jackson County is requesting. Pohlman said the County will then be gathering that information and sending it up to the State of Minnesota. She said that's what the EDA Office is working on.

Mayor thanked Pohlman for her update.

Mayor Polz said a “huge shout-out” to everybody, the volunteers and all the workers in the City. He said it was really cool to see how the community comes together and shines in a time of crisis. Mayor Polz said you look around and it’s amazing. He said the landscape has changed and it’s slowly working back but you still kind of have that thumb print of disaster that’s still sitting there and it’s just going to take time.

Regarding the next steps, Oxborough said not all the information is available yet. He said moving forward, there are some ideas on what the City is going to do to help out businesses and residents. He said Landbo has been doing a good job of communicating information out to the residents. Oxborough said information is becoming available every day. He said as of last word, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) officials will be visiting Jackson next week. Oxborough said work is being done on setting up Apps to speed up the process of exchanging information, whether it be for residents or for City officials. Oxborough said City staff is going to keep working just as hard as they did during the flood to keep the City moving forward.

Titus asked what is the purpose of the assessment form that’s being distributed to flood victims at dump sites.

Landbo said the assessment forms is what’s needed to be turned in to the County which will be sent to the State and Federal agencies. He said the same form is being distributed to business owners and residents affected by the flooding.

Oxborough said efforts are to have the form also available in an App form.

Titus said the bigger thing following the flood is what have we learned, what did the City do right, what needed improvement and what does the City do to mitigate to prevent flooding in the future.

Mayor Polz noted that data was gathered during the flooding and will be preserved electronically. He said the County took photographs of the Des Monies River and were able to identify high spots and low spots. Mayor Polz said there’s also drone footage that shows the flow of the river. He said there’s so many more data points that will be able to be analyzed going forward to put together a better plan to be prepared than we are today.

Mix commented on how great a community we have. She said it would have been disastrous if the City didn't have dedicated City staff, the County's help and all the volunteers. Mix said it was pretty amazing to see everybody come out. She said she just really wants to make sure how much the City appreciates it. Mix said we saw how hard the City staff worked, no doubt in the City Council's minds that they gave it their all and really saved the City, so thank-you so much.

Regarding the flood recap, Kirk Dunlavey noted the accountability of the people who gave the City of Jackson the river level predictions that were wrong and how upsetting it is that there are flood monitors that are under water. He asked how were there flood monitoring devices that didn't go to a 100-year high and are installed below that level. Dunlavey said he doesn't know who's accountable for that.

Paul Hargus said he feels the City does a pretty good job on their website, but feels they could have done a little bit better regarding updates on the flood for those that don't have a link to the City's Facebook page. He said there's big improvement needed for the City's website.

Mayor Polz said he agreed with Hargus since he doesn't link to Facebook either. He said the City did a good job with the Jackson Connect application where notifications were sent out and also had some physical sites for notifications. Mayor Polz said that will be on the "room for improvement list".

Hargus said as someone who commutes out to the country to work every day, it would have been nice to have had a list of which roads were closed and there were no lists on the City's website.

John Weland asked about the City using the same system as is used to issue Amber Alerts for flood notifications so everyone would get the information over their phone without having to opt-in to an App.

Mayor Polz said using the Amber Alert was discussed with the Incident Management Team that came to Jackson from Minneapolis. He said there's certain criteria that would allow the City to utilize that system, but the situation never met those thresholds in order to use the Amber Alert system.

Landbo said a prime example of when the City is allowed to use the Amber Alert is if the City's water would be contaminated and the City needed to issue a boil order. He said any immediate threat to life safety is when the Amber Alert can be used and for anything else, they cannot.

Other:

Alderman Mark Titus

Alderman Mark Titus asked if there was any new information regarding the former Prairie Winds Motel property.

City Attorney Brad Anderson said he received an email from the attorney representing the City regarding the former Prairie Winds motel property and said he was disappointed there hasn't been a decision issued by the Court. He said the attorney indicated there could be a decision issued in the next couple of weeks.

Alderman Chris Naumann

Alderman Chris Naumann said thank-you to everyone regarding the flooding efforts. He said there's a lot of people that need thank-you's. Naumann said there's a lot of people he knows that spent 35 hours working hard. He said he knows of one person that almost passed out from heat exhaustion on Sunday, June 23rd and kept on going. Naumann said there's a lot of people that need thank-you's out there and he thinks the City needs to do something in the future to start recognizing some of those people. He said he thinks there's quite a few awards that the City can give out.

Alderman Nathan Peterson

Alderman Nathan Peterson said he knows the schedule is busy with meetings, but asked if a Street Committee meeting could be scheduled in the next month or so.

Alderman Joe Pell

Alderman Joe Pell said he wanted to say thank-you to everybody that helped with the flooding, the volunteers, City crew and everybody. He said he wanted to remind everybody that it's going to be a long, slow process for cleanup so asked everyone to be patient.

Mayor Marcus Polz

Mayor Polz said it's a work in progress as far as a recognition event for all the City employees and volunteers in the community. He said work is underway with the Chamber of Commerce and sponsors for a recognition dinner and event.

Public Works Director Tony Oxborough

Public Works Director Tony Oxborough said everyone did a great job regarding the flooding efforts. He noted he wanted to also thank the City Council for declaring a State of Emergency. Oxborough said without the State of Emergency declaration, the City would not have had the Incident Command Team from the State come to Jackson to assist and help the City out through the flooding. He thanked Mayor Polz and Councilmembers for declaring a State of Emergency.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Mayor Polz entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

PETERSON/PELL moved and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the Jackson City Council meeting at 6:38 p.m.

David A. Maschoff, Council Secretary

Marcus Polz, Mayor

