

The Hartington City Council met for their regular meeting on April 22nd, 2024 at City Hall beginning at 5:00 P.M and Town Hall Meeting at the Skylon Ballroom at 7:00 P.M. Notice of time and place of the meeting was given in advance notice by posting. Notice of time and place of the meeting was communicated in the advanced notice to the Mayor and Council.

Present were Mayor Becker; Councilman Sudbeck, Bartling, and Kathol; City Clerk-Treasurer Bencoter, Deputy Clerk Schulte, and Legal Counsel Nikki Brandt. Councilman Christensen was absent.

Mayor Becker called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M., followed by all present reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. He announced that the open meetings law poster was on the back wall of the council room and reminded all present to silence their cell phones.

A motion to approve the minutes from the April 8th, 2024 meeting was made by Councilman Bartling and seconded by Councilman Kathol. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Kathol – yes, Sudbeck- yes. Motion carried.

Kyle Overturf with AMGL was present to review the 2023 Audit. He reviewed the pages of the Audit with Council clarifying that the Audit does not detect fraud, but is to prevent it. He stated the City of Hartington's source of revenue was about 50% from property and sales tax. The City debt amount has decreased and the Debt Service is healthy. The General Fund decreased by \$14,000 partly due to capital improvements. Water and sewer utilities are positive, sanitation has a loss of \$6,200, but with the 10% recent increase in sanitation services, that should improve for next year. The only TIF left now is with Cobblestone and that has 6 years left. Recommendations AMGL has is to clear out old checks still not cashed that are over a year old, formalize a capitalization plan, there are a lot overtime hours showing for payroll, create a petty cash system, publish all payroll rates each year – including part-time people.

Benchmarking with others, the City of Hartington is in good shape with valuation and are above the peer group. Sources of revenue are comparable to the peer group, sales tax are higher and goes into levy, franchise fees are higher, and state allocations is right in line with the peer group. Operating income is positive and is trending in the right position. Kyle Overturf stated there has been turnover with the Clerk's position and usually they see issues when there is mass turnover, but the transition was seamless.

Brittany Koenig with NPPD provided a retail update to Council. She stated we have 3 linemen in our area; Chris Bartling, Rob Lammers, and Drake Turner. Council and Mayor stated they are 3 of the best and appreciate everything they do. She discussed that the City of Hartington receives 12% in lease payment and put into the General Fund to spend as the City sees fit. Recently, the City converted to all LED lights and NPPD offered many incentives to customers for various reasons in the community. In 2023, NPPD was designated a Smart Energy Provider and has a goal of carbon free by 2050, which they are 56% of the way there. Brittany Koenig stated in 2023, NPPD earned its 3rd consecutive Diamon Level Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) designation from APPA. NPPD also has a smart phone app that consumers may download to receive alerts, billing, and more from NPPD. NPPD rates are some of the lowest in the U.S. and have had no residential rate increase in 11 years.

Mayor Becker presented a building permit for Zach and Lisa Becker. They are building a home in 220 Acres. A motion to approve the building permit for Zach and Lisa Becker was made by Councilman Bartling and seconded by Councilman Sudbeck. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Kathol – yes, Sudbeck- yes. Motion carried.

Mayor Becker presented the mowing contract for the City Cemetery with Maverick and Toby Heine. Clerk Bencoter verified this was the same amount of \$1,900 per month as last year. A motion to approve the City Cemetery mowing contract with Maverick and Toby Heine was made by Councilman Sudbeck and seconded by Councilman Kathol. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Kathol – yes, Sudbeck- yes. Motion carried.

Mayor Becker presented the Annual TIF report completed by Brandon Baller with Security Bank. Clerk Bencoter stated Brandon Baller wrote in email that the Westfield Acres TIF is paid off and only the Cobblestone Hotel remains.

Mayor Becker presented the appointment of Lisa Dendinger to the vacant position on the Planning & Zoning Board. Councilman Bartling stated she would be a great addition. A motion to approve Lisa Dendinger to the Planning & Zoning Board was made by Councilman Bartling and seconded by Councilman Sudbeck. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Kathol – yes, Sudbeck- yes. Motion carried.

Mayor Becker presented an LB840 Drawdown Request in the amount of \$735.54 which is needed to pay property taxes for the Industrial Park. A motion to approve the LB840 drawdown in the amount of

\$735.54 was made by Councilman Kathol and seconded by Councilman Sudbeck. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Kathol – yes, Sudbeck- yes. Motion carried.

Clerk Bencoter discussed with Council that the City office has had multiple calls questioning if we have a weekly or monthly camper court rate. At this time, we only have a daily rate of \$25.00 which includes all taxes. Mayor Becker asked Clerk Bencoter what surrounding communities do. She stated there are not many our size that have a camper court, but some do offer if you stay so many nights you get one free; however, Yankton area campgrounds do not have weekly rates. Mayor Becker said he is not wild about accepting a less rate for weekly stays and Councilman Kathol and Sudbeck agreed. They believe the \$25 per night is a good rate for full hookups. A motion was made to keep the camper court rates at \$25 per night and not to establish a weekly or monthly rate by Councilman Sudbeck and seconded by Councilman Kathol. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Kathol – yes, Sudbeck- yes. Motion carried.

Department Reports:

Park – Councilman Kathol: There were some extra expenses with the Park budget for sod, sprinklers, and cemented pad. Councilman Kathol has spoken with and addressed the baseball association about speaking with Councilman Kathol ahead of time before making purchases.

Pool –Councilman Bartling: nothing. Getting things ready for the summer.

Complex/Auditorium – Councilman Sudbeck: Scott Schrepf with Bank of Hartington provided artist renderings of the signs Bank of Hartington would put on the new building at the complex. They will not rotate so Wi-Fi will not be needed. They are made of steel and have 2 different designs. They are close to completing the building and then Brad Arens will seed. Track meets have been going steadily up there. The key fob device fell off the wall at the Auditorium on its own and there was no vandalism at the Auditorium a couple weeks ago. DSN Security fixed the device.

Fire/Ambulance– Councilman Christensen: absent.

General – The Hartington water project with Cedar Knox will probably not be happening and it appears they are committed to buying water from Yankton and have begun moving forward with that. We will have our Town Hall meeting tonight at 7 at the Skylon.

Legal Counsel Nikki Brandt: none.

Clerk Bencoter: After the heavy rain, we had people upset again about the water and flooding from what they believed was coming from the new Security Bank. They asked for it to be addressed to Council again. Brandon Baller with Security Bank has looked into the issue and spoken with contractors, business owners, and the homeowners. The Cedar Catholic Development Office contacted City Hall asking about being able to use the Auditorium to do a vendor fair the night of Candlelight Christmas and the following Saturday. Council agreed that \$250 to use the top and bottom would be a fair price. Postage prices have been rising and now they are talking of possibly rising the cost again. Currently we put \$500 per month on the postage machine, but that no longer is enough to even do postage for the utility bills along with all other mailing. Clerk Bencoter told Council we will need to start placing \$600 per month to try and cover postage expenses. Mayor Becker asked about paperless billing. Clerk Bencoter stated we have been offering it and trying to get people signed up and will put an informational item in with the next bills and put more notification out, but with the increase in postage, we are running short each month and need to increase currently to \$600.

Deputy Clerk Schulte: none.

Public Comments: Rob Dump asked in Kyle Overturf with AMGL stated that they average Sales Tax was \$376 per person. Mayor Becker explained it was \$376 per capita as they take the total sales tax we receive divided by the population, even though much of that sales tax comes from people outside of town, not just in town, but that is how the per capita is calculated.

The following bills were presented for payments:

General: AMGL 15,300.00, EMC Insurance Company 8,418.37, Hartelco Computers 159.99, Hartington VFW Post 5283 1.00, Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District 2,017.61, SHIFT 15.30.

Streets: Bank of Hartington 2,353.56, Black Hills Energy 1,051.71, EMC Insurance Company 1,283.91, Nebraska Public Power District 3,071.38, U.S. Cellular 235.93.

Water: Cedar-Knox Public Power District 1,506.91, EMC Insurance Companies 962.93, Nebraska Public Power District 318.56.

Sewer: Black Hills Energy 134.30, EMC Insurance Companies 1,386.04, Midwest Laboratories, Inc. 1,197.27, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality 150.00, Nebraska Public Power District 2,682.69.

Sanitation: Cedar County Treasurer 27.00, EMC Insurance Companies 1,181.78, G. Dickes 113.02, L.P. Gill, Inc. 6,757.50, Stop N Go 714.43, U.S. Cellular 82.87.

Fire: Black Hills Energy 149.79, EMC Insurance Companies 510.65, Nebraska Public Power District 126.06, Pomp's Tire Service 260.90, Stop N Go 97.47.

Ambulance: Avera Sacred Heart Hospital 8.16, Black Hills Energy 149.79, EMC Insurance Companies 335.57, Nebraska Public Power District 94.49, Steffen Drug 22.98, Teleflex, LLC 194.50, Tri-State Communications, Inc. 908.20, U.S. Cellular 139.61.

Recreation: Nebraska Public Power District 63.16.

Pool: Black Hills Energy 40.30, Nebraska Public Power District 77.37, Recreonics Corporation 277.06.

Parks: Barking Dog Interpretive Design, Inc. 195.62, Grossenburg Implement 9,500.00, G. Kuehn 51.31, Midwest Tree 650.00, Martin's Flag Co. 513.21, Nebraska Public Power District 287.58, Pomp's Tire Service 12.72, Tri-State Turf & Irrigation, LLC 3,092.00.

Complex: Nebraska Public Power District 47.37, Tri-State Turf & Irrigation 169.20.

Library: Tami Anderson 300.00, Black Hills Energy 376.37, Ingram 924.70, Midwest Tape 61.47, Nebraska Public Power District 126.62, Premier Lawn & Landscaping 215.00, Speed Square 160.00, X-Pert Lawn and Landscaping 305.00.

City Hall: Black Hills Energy 100.16, Eakes Office Solutions 189.61, International Institute MC. 310.00, Nebraska Public Power District 240.96, Tri-State Turf & Irrigation, LLC. 125.00.

Auditorium: Black Hills Energy 652.58, Nebraska Public Power District 82.26.

Transfer Station: Cedar-Knox Public Power District 239.09, EMC Insurance Companies 510.65, Gill Hauling, Inc. 1,204.87, Hartington Shopper 294.90.

Vets Memorial: Nebraska Public Power District 54.48.

March, 2024 payroll was \$58,687.47.

Clerk Benschoter added check #64287 to EMC Insurance Company for \$14,589.90. A motion to pay the bills with the addition of check #64287 to EMC Insurance Company was made by Councilman Bartling and seconded by Councilman Kathol. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Kathol – yes, Sudbeck- yes. Motion carried.

A motion to recess at 5:50 P.M. and reconvene at 6:55 P.M. at the Skylon Ballroom for the Town Hall meeting was made by Councilman Bartling and seconded by Councilman Kathol. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Kathol – yes, Sudbeck- yes. Motion carried.

A motion to reconvene in the Skylon Ballroom at 6:56 P.M. was made by Councilman Bartling and seconded by Councilman Kathol. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Kathol – yes, Sudbeck- yes. Motion carried.

Mayor Becker stated the City has put on the ballot two separate issues; building a new City Shop, and moving and purchasing of the Skylon Ballroom. He stated for the ballroom, they would be moving all the way down to the plate. He stated currently the City guys have been operating out of multiple maintenance sheds as the equipment has gotten bigger and we need more space. He stated the proposed new City Shop would be the exact same as the current fire hall, minus the office space, would be the bays only. Pat Guy, former City Utility Superintendent stated the current building is out dated, tied together with cables and too small. Questions were asked about the size of the old fire station to use and Pat Guy stated it was too small as it was only 40'x 80'. He stated we already have 3 pieces of equipment stored there. Corey Kramer, the Current Utility Superintendent stated they have items stored in the City Shop,

the old firehall, the Auditorium, and the horse barn-cement pile area. The new garbage truck is bigger and currently will not fit in the shop. Questions asked if this was the only option and Mayor Becker stated it is the only option at this time that is being presented to vote. Questions were asked if the new shop would be big enough for the next 20 years and Corey Kramer stated he believed it would be adequate size for quite some time. Questions asked what would be done with the old shop and Mayor Becker stated decisions have not been made, but since it was in such rough shape it would probably be torn down, but that decision would be made by Council. If it is voted to proceed, they would like to have cement work done by fall and hopefully into the new building by next spring. Corey Kramer stated currently it costs between \$1,200-\$1,500 per month to heat the current shop.

Mayor Becker spoke of the Skylon and stated the roped-out area out front is to represent where the new addition to the Skylon would be if it was approved and moved. He stated the whole curved structure is what would be moved, seating capacity would be larger with the new design and there would be new bathrooms. Roger Wortman with P & E stated they need the property for the business and have given the city until 01/01/2025 to either move it or it will be demolished. Mayor Becker stated it would not be a profit center, but bring a sense of community to the town. Miranda Becker, Economic Development Director, stated community centers can bring many events to town, benefiting other businesses within the town. Questions were asked on how many weddings have been at the Skylon last year and how many with over 350 people. Roger Wortman stated he only does large weddings there so every wedding is over 300 and he had 3 of them over 500 last year. He stated they have about 20 weddings a year and have to turn down many things because they are not available. Mayor Becker stated there are three camps people are in and they respect everyone's vote. He stated there are those that believe it is worth saving, those that think maybe it's time for a new one and those who don't want a community center. Ballots will go out on Wednesday and if they are voted down, then Council will gather a plan for a new community center to move forward. They have no concrete numbers on a new community center, but believe it will be at least 3 million or more. Questions asked about who would be managing the community center and Mayor Becker stated the City would lease the building out and it would become someone's business to take care of with the City overseeing. Mayor Becker stated they know there is frustration with taxes already rising with the school addition, so that is why they placed the vote with the people to decide instead of Council. He stated we are giving the people the choice. Questions were asked if there were donations received would that lower the bond amount. Mayor Becker stated absolutely, Council would take any money as the goal is to spend less and pay off sooner.

Andy Forney with DA Davidson spoke about the bonds that would be issued. He said community centers are in high demand right now. He stated the bond would be a 20-year bond and would be static. Tax dollars can only be used to pay off the bond and cannot levy after the bond is paid off. He stated currently the bond interest is between 4-4.5%. Andy Forney stated that on a home worth \$100,000, if the Skylon only passed it would be an additional \$9.31/mth in property taxes, if the shop only passed it would be an additional \$7.50/mth and if both passed it would be an additional \$16.87/mth.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Bartling and seconded by Councilman Kathol. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Kathol – yes, Sudbeck- yes. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 P.M. The next scheduled meeting is May 13th, 2024.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brittini Benscoter
City Clerk-Treasurer