

The Hartington City Council met for a public hearing and regular meeting on January 27th, 2025 at City Hall beginning at 5:00 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 Christensen, Kathol, and Bartling; City Clerk-Treasurer Benschoter, Deputy Clerk Schulte, and Legal Counsel Nikki Brandt. Councilman Sudbeck was absent.

Mayor Becker called the regular meeting to order at 5:01 P.M., followed by all present reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion to approve the minutes from the January 13th, 2025 meeting was made by Councilman Bartling and seconded by Councilman Christensen. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Christensen – yes, Kathol – yes. Motion carried.

Mayor Becker discussed with Council that he was approached by one of the owners of the Cobblestone Hotel regarding short-term rentals such as Airbnb's not having to pay the City Occupation Tax (OCC) of 5% like the hotels do, making their rates cheaper, and they did not believe that was fair. Mayor Becker stated he agreed with that. He stated our current Ordinance does not have anything regarding Airbnb's and the OCC Tax is only for hotels. He asked Council if they wanted to look at updating the City Ordinance to include Airbnb's. Council discussed there have been more Airbnb's now in the City than before when they previously discussed this issue a couple years ago. Councilman Kathol and Christensen stated they believed it was fair to include the short-term rentals the same as the hotel and motels. They discussed the Nebraska Statue that states a short-term rental is anything for a period not longer than thirty consecutive days. Council agreed to have legal write up a new Ordinance including short-term rentals in the City OCC Tax and will review and vote next Council meeting.

Mayor Becker introduced the discussion of garbage rates with Council. He stated that additional tipping fee expenses would be roughly \$2,600 this year in using 2024's numbers as an estimate. He asked Clerk Benschoter the last time we increased rates and she stated residential garbage rates were increased in 2024 and believed transfer station rates were increased in 2022. Mayor Becker stated our rates are currently at where we are not losing money at the transfer station as long as we keep pace with the increases. He stated the City of Hartington pays for all costs out at the transfer station and for garbage dumping, but we have many non-residents of Hartington coming and using the transfer station at the expense of the Hartington residents. He feels there should be a higher rate for the non-residents of Hartington that are not contributing by taxes to pay for those expenses. He discussed the current rate is \$10.50 for the first 300 pounds and \$3.50 per additional 100 pounds. Councilman Christensen stated we should at least raise it enough to cover the additional tipping fees. Mayor Becker stated he believed maybe 25% or 50% more for non-residents of Hartington. Councilman Kathol stated he is more for the 50% rate increase for non-residents of Hartington. He stated there are many things the City pays for non-residents of Hartington to use such as baseball and the pool which he stated we want people to come and use those facilities, but he didn't think garbage should be something the residents of Hartington should have to be footing the bill for those extra expenses for non-residents of Hartington to use. Councilman Christensen stated he agreed with charging 50% more for non-residents of Hartington and maybe that will open up conversations for those outside of the community or the County to step in and help pay for expenses. Mayor Becker asked for the number for non-residents of Hartington that use the transfer station and Deputy Clerk Schulte presented the spreadsheet she completed showing residents and non-residents of Hartington use of the transfer station. The spreadsheet shows the use of the transfer station is almost half by non-residents of Hartington. Council agreed to raise non-residents of Hartington rates by 50% and asked Legal Brandt to write up a Resolution for next meeting for Council to review and vote on next Council meeting. Clerk Benschoter asked Council if they wanted non-residents of Hartington to pay out at the dump as discussed last meeting or to bill them as we currently do, which has had many issues. Council stated they would like to see non-residents of Hartington paying at the dump and no more billing to non-residents of Hartington. Clerk Benschoter stated they have the option to pay by cash, check, or credit/debit card out at the dump now.

Mayor Becker introduced the LB840 drawdown request to JEO and Keiser Ag for work at the Industrial Park. A motion to approve the LB840 drawdown request to JEO and Keiser Ag for \$2,760.00 was made by Councilman Christensen and seconded by Councilman Kathol. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Christensen – yes, Kathol – yes. Motion carried.

Mayor Becker introduced the LB840 loan application for Hartington Auto & Truck Parts. He stated they purchased the building at 318 S. Robinson. A motion to approve the LB840 loan in the amount of \$50,000 to Hartington Auto & Truck Parts was made by Councilman Bartling and seconded by Councilman Christensen. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Christensen – yes, Kathol – yes. Motion carried.

Mayor and Council reviewed the Hartington Public Library 2024 Year in Review provided by Library Director Tami Anderson. The library had 50,394 in total circulation, 279 programs, 1,671 patrons, added 635 new materials and many other great contributions to the library and the City of Hartington.

Department Reports:

Park – Councilman Kathol: They usually remove trees in the summer, but it has been brought to his attention that they prefer to remove them in the winter and asked if the City maintenance men can do that. Mayor Becker stated he would talk to City Utility Superintendent Corey Kramer.

Pool – Councilman Bartling: none.

Complex/Auditorium – Councilman Sudbeck: absent

Fire/Ambulance – Councilman Christensen: none.

General – Mayor Becker: The City has found a Skylon Manager, Corey Kramer. He stated Corey Kramer is working on getting pricing, bookings and a website. He stated they are trying to open in August of this year, but they are not sure if that will happen.

Legal Counsel Nikki Brandt: none.

Clerk Benscoter: The CD's the City has are maturing in February and if any changes are wanting to me made to them, the Council will need to vote at the next meeting. She stated the Rural Fire Board is wanting to put most of the funds from the Ambulance Savings into theirs as they did last time. Mayor Becker asked Council if they foresee any future projects they are needing money from. Councilman Kathol asked if they are 6-month CD's. Clerk Benscoter stated currently they are 6 month CD's, but it depends on rates and sometimes longer CD's have better rates, but the last couple times the 6 month ones have had better rates, but she will check with the bank right before next meeting to get rates so Council can decide on whether to keep 6 month CD's or extend them based on rates. Mayor Becker stated he would get with Clerk Benscoter to go over finances to see if there should be any revisions done with the CD's to discuss with Council at next meeting.

She stated the full-time employees had their annual reviews with Matt Dresden to go over the retirement financials. Matt Dresden spoke with Clerk Benscoter that the current Simple IRA Plan the City has only allows employees to make any changes with their retirement contributions 60 days before January 1. The City is able to add a line that allows an employee to make changes in their retirement contributions monthly. She stated someone may want to add more throughout the year, or maybe has a financial hardship such as an illness and wants to reduce their contribution. She stated Matt Dresden stated some businesses don't want their employees to make changes at any time, but she feels a person's retirement account contribution preferences shouldn't be the City's responsibility to determine. Council agreed and are fine with being able to make changes as the employee sees fit. She will have Matt Dresden complete new documents and present them to Council to vote at next meeting.

Deputy Clerk Schulte: none.

Public Comments: none

The following bills were presented for payments:

General:	Hartington-Newcastle Public School District 3,800.00, League Association of Risk Management 4,784.99, Nebraska Public Power District 67.99, Northeast Community College 650.00, SHIFT 15.30.
Streets:	Black Hills Energy 1,752.55, Bomgaars 521.60, JEO 3,000.00, Kruse True Value 4.99, Nebraska Public power District 3,434.59, PowerPlan 320.91, Yankton Janitorial Supply, Inc. 268.00.
Water:	Nebraska Public Power District 396.66, Nebraska Public Health Environment Laboratory 15.00.
Sewer:	Black Hills Energy 202.53, Nebraska Public Power District 3,188.95,
Sanitation:	T. Becker 59.50, Yankton Janitorial Supply, Inc. 62.00.
Fire:	Black Hills Energy 297.31, Dearborn National Life Insurance Company 83.76, Nebraska Public Power District 121.89.

Ambulance: Avera Sacred Heart Hospital 439.30, Black Hills Energy 297.32, Nebraska Public Power District 90.32.

Recreation: Nebraska Public Power District 63.16.

Pool: Black Hills Energy 41.29, Nebraska Public Power District 47.37

Parks: Nebraska Department of Revenue 229.22, Nebraska Public Power District 287.54.

Complex: Nebraska Public Power District 78.95

Library: Black Hills Energy 734.90, Feilmeier Electric 325.89, Hometown Leasing 48.90, Ingram Library Services 568.19, Midwest Tape 154.44, Nebraska Public Power District 154.23, Premier Lawn & Landscaping 425.00.

City Hall: Black Hills Energy 177.13, Dixie Fischer 100.00, Nebraska Public Power District 368.79, Premier Lawn & Landscaping 240.00.

Auditorium: Black Hills Energy 1,298.20, Nebraska Public Power District 88.93, X-Pert Lawn and Landscaping 475.00.

Economic
Development: Nebraska Development Network – NE Region 75.00.

Transfer Station: Deere Credit, Inc. 730.02, Olson’s Pest Technicians 80.00.

Vets Memorial: Nebraska Public Power District 58.45, X-Pert Lawn and Landscaping 475.00.

City Shop: Darin Pick 350.00, Nebraska Public Power District 101.74, RaDec Construction Co. Inc. 12,215.04.

November, 2024 payroll was \$ 49,971.21.

December, 2024 payroll was \$ 60,769.97.

A motion to pay the bills was made by Councilman Christensen and seconded by Councilman Bartling. A roll call vote was taken. Bartling – yes, Christensen – yes, Kathol – yes. Motion carried.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 P.M. The next scheduled meeting is February 10th, 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brittni Bencoter
City Clerk-Treasurer