

**MINUTES**  
**North Newton City Council – Regular Meeting**  
**December 11, 2017 – 7:00 P.M.**  
**North Newton City Hall**

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Ron Braun called the meeting to order. Those present and constituting a quorum were:

**COUNCIL:** Paul Harder, Jim Goering, Ron Ratzlaff, Jane Schmidt and Gregg Dick

**STAFF:** John Torline, Danny Bisoni, Randy Jordan, Gregory Nye and Pat Redding

**OTHERS:** Fred Schroeder, Grace Wild, Dennis Campbell, Kurt Friesen and Wendy Nugent

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the November 13, 2017 meeting were presented.

**MOTION:** Dick moved, Ratzlaff seconded, to approve the November 13, 2017 minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

**3. Citizen Comments**

No one spoke.

**4. Consider a Public Hearing on the proposed assessments for the North Woods Plaza Water and Sewer Projects.**

Mayor Braun opened the Public Hearing at 7:01. No one spoke so the Public Hearing was closed at 7:02.

**5. Consider an Ordinance Levying Special Assessments for the North Woods Plaza Water and Sewer Projects.**

Torline reviewed the process of levying special assessments for projects that have been completed the past year. Following the Public Hearing Council is asked to adopt an Ordinance certifying the debt. The property owners will be given 30 days to pay the assessments in full. If they choose not to pay, the costs will be rolled into our upcoming bond issue. The costs will be assessed annually including principle and interest for the duration of 15 years.

**MOTION:** Harder moved, Goering seconded, to adopt Ordinance 617-17 levying special assessments on certain properties to pay the costs of improvements in the City of North Newton. Motion carried unanimously.

**6. Consider recommendations contained in the 2018 Salary and Benefit Package memorandum from the City Administrator.**

Torline is required annually to analyze factors regarding compensation of employees and review employee benefits and present his recommendations to the council. Torline reported on the following three recommendations:

**1. Healthcare coverage:**

The city used to offer health insurance to its employees and paid half of a family premium or allowed a cash alternative to employees that didn't enroll in the health insurance plan. After the affordable care act was passed the City was no longer allowed to continue to give an in lieu of payment. At that time no one was enrolling in health insurance plan so the benefit was discontinued. This resulted in an equivalent raise in employees' salaries. Since then there have been staff changes and there are some employees that are paying 100% of their insurance. In the last three years the cost of insurance has increased almost 50% for these employees and the cost of living raises the city has given has totaled 5%. Torline is proposing that the City pay 50% of the family premium. There are two employees that are interested so the estimated maximum annual cost for this benefit is \$15,400.

**2. Cost of Living Raise**

Torline is requesting that all employees receive a 1% cost-of-living raise on January 1, 2018 except the City Administrator.

**3. Pay Range for City Clerk**

The City Clerk continues to take on additional responsibility including finance administration with the issuance of short and long term debt and grant administration. Based on the additional responsibilities and in consideration of the relative importance of the position, Torline is recommending that the City Clerk's salary range be increased to be the same as that of the Police Chief's salary range.

Torline is also recommending that the city continue to provide other benefits at current levels.

MOTION: Ratzlaff moved, Dick seconded, to enter into an executive session at 7:17 for 10 minutes to discuss confidential personnel issues. City Administrator, Attorney Nye and City Clerk were also present at the executive session. Motion carried unanimously.

At 7:27 the Council returned back to regular session whereupon Mayor Braun noted that no decisions were made and no actions were taken during the Executive Session.

There was some discussion regarding offering insurance to employees and the salary and benefit package.

MOTION: Schmidt moved, Ratzlaff seconded, to approve offering health insurance to employees, a cost of living increase of 1% and changing the City Clerk pay range to be equal to the Police Chief pay range. Motion carried unanimously.

**7. Consider Authorizing the Mayor to Approve Year End Bills**

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MOTION: Goering moved, Dick seconded, to authorize Mayor Braun to approve 2017 year-end bills. Motion carried unanimously.

## **8. Reports**

**a. Mayor/Council.** Mayor Braun reported that the auction at the Christmas Dinner raised over \$800 for the Sher Klassen Neufeld Fund after the city match funds are applied. Braun thanked council and staff for their generosity. Councilman Goering thanked Braun for his exceptional auctioneering skills. Councilman Goering reported that the current asset balance of the North Newton Community Foundation (NNCF) is approximately \$213,000. There is \$3,300 left to be matched by the City of North Newton before the end of 2017. At the November Board meeting Goering stepped down as Board Chairman and Kurt Friesen was voted on to be his successor. Mayor Braun thanked Councilman Goering for his six years of service and for the strong leadership he has provided for the NNCF.

**b. Staff.** Torline highlighted his 2017 Year End Report that lists the happenings of this past year. Torline reported that Kidron Bethel wants to finish Lakewood Circle and maybe some other projects that would be wrapped up in the future bond issue. As a result it appears like bonds won't be issued until sometime late in 2018. The landscaped area at 30<sup>th</sup> and Main Street has been decorated for Christmas. Irma Voran, Jane Schmidt and city staff helped with this project. Mayor Braun thanked those involved in working on the decorations. Earles Engineering is starting to survey the trail path. Bisoni and Entz have rented some equipment to blaze a proposed trail through the woods. Torline reported it is estimated that the project will be completed late in 2018.

Councilman Goering left the meeting.

Bisoni reported that the equipment Torline already mentioned worked very well to cut a path in the woods for the trail. Bisoni rented a brand new rotary mower that attached to our skid steer. The equipment cut off trees up to eight inches in diameter and basically chopped the trees up into rough wood chips. After the safety concern voiced at last council meeting Bisoni contacted KDOT regarding the crossing at 27<sup>th</sup> and Main Street. KDOT partially answered his request and said we couldn't replace the yellow lights with red lights. Bisoni is still waiting to hear back from them regarding our options for making this crossing safer. Bisoni then explained a graph that he accesses on his smart phone that informs him of the water level in our water tower. He was monitoring the levels on site during the Co-op fire and could make quick decisions as a result. The valve to Newton was opened so we could get water from the Wholesale Water District. Bisoni estimates that approximately 700,000 gallons were used between water from our water tower and the water from the Wholesale Water District. Mayor Braun reported that there was a water leak on Thanksgiving morning that Bisoni and Entz were called out to fix. Braun thanked them for their work repairing the leak over the Thanksgiving week-end.

Chief Jordan reported that there was a Safety and Justice Forum held at City Hall at the end of November. It was well attended and the Police Department received helpful feedback from citizens regarding policing in North Newton. Jordan also reported that burglaries are on the rise and they have responded to a couple at Bethel College. Drug cases are increasing as well as welfare checks.

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Attorney Nye had nothing more to report.

**c. Clerk/Treasurer.** Redding presented December accounts payable and November/December payroll for approval.

MOTION: Goering moved, Harder seconded, to approve December accounts payable and miscellaneous checks in the amount of \$91,371.10 and November/December payroll in the amount of \$25,749.18 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Redding also reported that fifteen coupons were given out during the Tree Program. Only four have been turned back into the City for a cost of \$267.50. Nurseries have until January 8, 2018 to turn in the receipts.

**9. Non-Agenda Items**

None presented.

**10. Adjournment.** Mayor Braun declared the meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Patricia Redding  
City Clerk

Ronald D. Braun  
Mayor

January 8, 2018  
Date Approved