



**TWO
RIVERS**
WISCONSIN

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, December 16, 2024 at 6:00 PM

**Council Chambers - City Hall, 3rd Floor
1717 E. Park Street, Two Rivers, WI 54241**

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Council President Stechmesser called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL BY CITY CLERK

Councilmembers: Mark Bittner, Shannon Derby, Bill LeClair, Darla LeClair, Tim Petri, Bonnie Shimulunas, Scott Stechmesser, Adam Wachowski, Doug Brandt

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Dawson, Library Director; Mike Mathis, Parks and Recreation Director; Matt Heckenlaible, Public Works Director; Kassie Paider, Finance Director; Dave Murack, Fire Chief; Dave Dassey, IT Assistant; Brian Delleman, Electric Utility Director; Ben Meinnert, Police Chief; Sean Griffin, City Attorney; and Greg Buckley, City Manager

4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY COUNCIL MEMBER REQUESTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MEETING FROM A REMOTE LOCATION

None.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

None.

6. SWEARING IN AND BADGE PINNING CEREMONY FOR NEW FULL-TIME POLICE OFFICERS

- A. Alek Henseler
- B. Daniel Stonebraker
- C. Brennon Daley

Police Chief Meinnert introduced the new officers to the Council, City Clerk Baryenbruch administered the oath of office to each of the officers.

7. INPUT FROM THE PUBLIC

Andre Robitalle (2313 Jefferson Street) – Provided positive comments about the Neshotah Park playground additions, thanked the Council for listening sessions, and questioned the rationale of the delay in property revaluations prior to the 2024 revaluation..

Erin Gonnerman (3718 Riverview Dr) – Expressed her support of the Van der Brohe Arboretum, stating that an anonymous letter was sent to the arboretum and has circulated in the community and the allegations in the letter are not all true. A petition went around about the arboretum and many people are in support of it and believe it is a great asset to the city.

Charlette Mahnke (1626 Mahogany Run) – Expressed her support of the Van der Brohe Arboretum, stating a letter was sent to Mr. Buckley with false statements and the person that drafted the letter tried to act as a resident of Mahogany Run which is not true. The residents of Mahogany Run are in favor of the arboretum and believe it is a good addition to the city.

Jeff Dahlke (3727 Adam St) – Questioned why the City was out of compliance on property assessments for many years and who is responsible for being out of compliance. Mr. Buckley responded that a revaluation is required only when the City's assessments are shown to be, on average, more than 10 percent out of line with actual sale prices for five years, based on WI Dept. of Revenue sales studies. As recently as 2019, Two Rivers residential assessment ratio per WI DOR was 101.6%; it only has exceeded 110 percent since 2021.

Mr. Dahlke also stated that he is requesting for a referendum on the April 2025 ballot regarding form of government in the City. He also commented on the funding for the apartment complexes stating in other communities it was a pay go TIF grant not up-front TIF money and he is against the change in business hours at City Hall.

Gordon Miller (3920 Memorial Drive) – Questioned how to have an assessor review the assessment on his property. Mr. Buckley stated that contact information for the City's assessing firm could be obtained from City staff; he encouraged Mr. Miller to speak with the Finance Director, Ms. Paider, before leaving the meeting.

8. COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS

Letters and other communications from citizens

Councilmember Wachowski stated that he received a concern from a citizen regarding Anhalt Nature Preserve; questions about property assessments; a concern about the Uni-mart property; and a letter regarding the Arboretum.

Councilmember Bitter reported that he received a letter regarding the Arboretum that included details about the Arboretum, action that took place on November 4, status of a petition in support of the arboretum.

Councilmember Derby stated that she received a question regarding downtown business loans and rates.

Councilmember Shimulunas reported that she received a question about an issue with the Sandy Bay Subdivision website; the same letter regarding the Arboretum and asked the Council to host a special meeting to speak with the members of the Arboretum.

Council President Stechmesser stated that he received a concern from a resident regarding the increases in taxes.

9. COUNCIL REPORTS FROM BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES

Councilmember Wachowski reported on the Plan Commission, stating that the December meeting was a joint meeting with the City Council to review the architectural plans for a planned unit development located at 3000 Forest Avenue. He also reported on the Advisory Recreation Board, stating the board is working on the Food Truck fee and set up location at Neshotah Beach. He added that there has been great participation in youth programs, Neshotah Park will be receiving additional play equipment due to a grant from the West Foundation and funding from the Room Tax Commission.

Councilmember D. LeClair reported on Main Street, stating voting is currently open for the downtown business Christmas decorations, the theme for 2024 was Christmas Movies. Residents can go online to vote in two different categories.

Councilmember Derby reported on the Library Board, stating programing has been going great and the programs about shipwrecks have been popular.

10. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Invited Guests

Recognition of the service and dedication provided by Paid On Call Employees of the Two Rivers Fire Department Upon Termination of the Paid on Call Program

- a. Firefighter Lenny Lewis
- b. Firefighter Jason Wiesner

Fire Chief Murack provided history on the Paid On Call Firefighter Program and how the program evolved over the years ultimately ending the program in 2024. Plaques were presented to both employees.

B. Status Update/Reports

1. Staffing Updates

Mr. Buckley reported on the ongoing recruitments: Police Clerk/Evidence Custodian – Scheduling interviews; City Manager – search consultant approved by City Council on November 18, will begin engagement with Recruitment and selection committee in January 2025 with goal of filling position by July 2025; City Planner/Community Development Director – Accepting Applications

2. Two Rivers Utilities Annual Community Food Drive

Mr. Buckley reported TREP informed the Two Rivers Utilities that its food drive had 1001 items donated, with a total weight of 975 pounds of food donated. Thank you to Magee and Koenig Schools for teaming up with TRU. Students were asked to bring one non-perishable food item. Students who donated were entered to win an electric scooter or Amazon gift card. Local residents who donated 3 non-perishable items could select a string of Christmas lights, a flood bulb, or light bulb. They also entered to win a TV, a dehumidifier, or a toolset.

3. Thanksgiving at Two Rivers Senior Center

Mr. Buckley reported 100 people were served and 108 volunteer hours made this event possible. They collected \$2,400 in donations and in-kind giving.

4. Two Rivers Police Department "Operation Elijah" Toy Drive

Mr. Buckley reported that the "Elijah Vue Facebook Group" organized a toy drive to benefit local children in need, in honor of Elijah Vue.. Unwrapped toys and monetary donations were collected at the Two Rivers Police Department. The amount of support and donations was truly amazing. Thank you to all who donated.

5. Cool City Christmas 2024

Mr. Buckley reported Cool City Christmas 2024 was held over the weekend and was a successful event. It has been announced that this will be an annual event.

6. Reminder on Ordinance Requirements for Clearing Snow and Ice from Sidewalks

Mr. Buckley reported that snow and ice must be removed from any public sidewalk within 24 hours from the time when the snow ceases to fall. Also, blowing or depositing snow or ice in the street is against the law. Offenders are subject to fines in accordance with the Two Rivers Municipal Code 4-1-12. The Police Department or the City Engineer may enforce this section.

7. Reminder of Closures for the Christmas and New Year's Holidays

- a. City Hall Closed for the Holidays on December 24 & 25, 2024, and January 1, 2025
- b. Community House Closed for the Holidays on December 24 & 25, 2024 and January 1, 2025
- c. Senior Center Closed for the Holidays on December 24 & 25, 2024 and January 1, 2025
- d. Lester Public Library Closed for the Holidays on December 24, 25, 31, 2024, and January 1, 2025

8. Winter Parking Ban Status

Mr. Buckley reported the Winter Parking Ban took effect December 1 but the Police Department in consultation with the City Manager's Office, continues to evaluate weather conditions and will suspend enforcement if there are extended periods of snow-free conditions. Watch the Two Rivers City Hall and Two Rivers Police Department Facebook Pages and website for updated information on the parking ban.

9. Lead Water Service Lateral Replacement, 2024-25 Contract

Mr. Buckley reported on the 2024-2025 scattered site LSL contract replacements as of 12-12-2024: 64 – Public Water Services Replaced; 42 – Public Sewer Laterals Replaced; 9 – Private Water Services Replaced; 7 – Private Sewer Lateral Replaced; two services were replaced on Madison Street due to service leaks, under contract. Contracts with Manitowoc County, for shared ARPA funding assistance on the 2024 Roosevelt Avenue project and 2024-2025 Scattered Site LSL replacement, are on tonight's agenda

10. Sandy Bay Highlands Subdivision Phase 3

Mr. Buckley reported Orchard Lane (Lake Breeze Way to Rawley Court) along with all of Rawley Court is graveled. Those roads are "available for public access" but a reminder that the area is still an active construction site. The contractor has completed all of the sanitary sewer on Orchard Lane and started up Sandy Ridge Drive.

11. Grants Awarded to Two Rivers Parks and Recreation for Capital Projects and Urban Forestry

- a. A \$100,000 Grant from The West Foundation and a \$20,000 Contribution from the Room Tax Commission to go to Neshotah Park Investment

Mr. Buckley reported a climbing boulder and bamboo climber will go next to the zipline at Neshotah Park, thanks to a \$100,000 grant from West Foundation and a \$20,000 contribution from the City's Room Tax Commission. Installation will take place in spring 2025.

- b. WI DNR \$25,000 Grant to Urban Forestry

Mr. Buckley reported this grant will fund planting trees at Koenig Elementary, removal of ash trees at the library, planting trees at the library, outreach and education programs, a forestry track youth apprentice, and continuing efforts to remove and plant street trees.

- c. Packers Foundation \$3,000 Grant to Build Dugouts at Vietnam Veterans Park and Little League Fields.

Mr. Buckley reported this grant will fund to build dugouts at Vietnam Vets Memorial Park and one of the little league fields. We will partner with the Two Rivers High Construction Class and Art Class to plan, design, and build the dugouts.

12. Community and Economic Development Update

Mr. Buckley reported the City Council and Plan Commission met in joint session on December 9 for site and architectural plan review for a 52-unit market rate apartment complex proposed for construction on the former Hansen the Florist site at 3000 Forest Avenue. Public hearing on the site plan for this project is on January 6, 2025 at 6:00 PM. Draft development agreement for possible City TIF grant assistance is being reviewed by the developer. Construction continues on downtown projects at Sauve's Automotive and the Violet Inn.

13. Upcoming Events

- a. Shop with a Cop, December 18, 2024
- b. Lester Public Library Events, December 21, 2024 & January 3, 2025
- c. Two Rivers Parks and Recreation FREE Slow Flow Yoga Class

14. Other

Mr. Buckley reported on the 2024 Tax Bills that were recently sent to property owners. Two Rivers had not conducted a city-wide revaluation since 1999.

State law requires that a revaluation be completed if WI Department of Revenue sales studies show that the total assessed valuation of the municipality varies by more than 10 percent from actual market value for a period of five years or more. Two Rivers' Aggregate Assessment Ratio, as determined by the WI Department of Revenue, was "in compliance" for the years 2018-2020, but went out of compliance in 2021 and moved further out of compliance over the next two years, due to rapidly escalating home values – this trend has true here and across the country.

The City Manager also reported that the City of Two Rivers is the only local taxing unit that is NOT collecting more taxes from city taxpayers in 2024 (for the 2025 Budget) than in 2023. The City Manager and City Council shared this goal for the 2025 Budget, bearing in mind that many taxpayers would see increases in their tax bills due to the 2024 revaluation. The commitment to keeping taxes down is not unique to 2024; it is the City's track record for the past 5 years (and beyond). As shown in the box below, the City portion of the total levy has increased by only 7.78% over the past 5 years, a far lower rate of increase than the levies of other local taxing entities.

C. Legislative/Intergovernmental Update

11. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Presentation of Minutes

City Council Work Session, November 25, 2024
City Council Regular Meeting, December 2, 2024
City Council Special Meeting, December 9, 2024

Recommended Action:

Motion to waive reading and adopt the minutes

B. Minutes of Meetings

1. Library Board, November 12, 2024
2. Public Utilities Committee, December 2, 2024
3. Public Works Committee, December 4, 2024
4. Room Tax Commission, December 6, 2024
5. Plan Commission Joint Meeting with City Council, December 9, 2024
6. Advisory Recreation Board, December 11, 2024

Recommended Action:

Motion to receive and file

C. Department Reports, December 2024

1. Electric
2. Inspections
3. Library
4. Parks & Recreation
5. Public Works
6. Safety
7. Water
8. Tourism

Recommended Action:

Motion to receive and file

- D. Summary of Verified Bills for the Month November 2024 for \$2,394,975.02

Recommended Action:

Motion to receive and file

- E. Recommendation from Plan Commission Meeting of December 9, 2024 to set a public hearing for Site and Architectural Plan Approval for Residential Planned Unit Development at 3000 Forest Avenue

Recommended Action:

Motion to set the public hearing for Monday, January 6, 2025 at 6:00PM

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the various actions recommended

Motion carried with a voice vote.

Motion made by B. LeClair seconded by Brandt.

Voting Yea: Bittner, Brandt, Derby, B. LeClair, D. LeClair, Petri, Shimulunas, Stechmesser, Wachowski

12. CITY COUNCIL - FORMAL ITEMS

- A. Resolution Amending 2025 Parks and Recreation Capital Budget to Account for New Neshotah Park Playground Equipment to be Funded With Grants from the West Foundation and the City's Room Tax Commission

Recommended Action:

Motion to waive reading and adopt the resolution

Motion carried with a roll call vote.

Motion made by Bittner seconded by B. LeClair.

Voting Yea: Bittner, Brandt, Derby, B. LeClair, D. LeClair, Petri, Shimulunas, Stechmesser, Wachowski

- B. Resolution Declaring Official Intent to Reimburse Expenditures from Proceeds of Borrowing-- 2025 Budgeted Capital Projects

Recommended Action:

Motion to waive reading and adopt the resolution

Motion carried with a roll call vote.

Motion made by Wachowski seconded by Derby.

Voting Yea: Bittner, Brandt, Derby, B. LeClair, D. LeClair, Petri, Shimulunas, Stechmesser, Wachowski

- C. Action Setting City Council Community Listening Sessions for 2025

Recommended Action:

Motion to adopt the proposed rules as recommended by City Attorney and to set dates/times for such sessions for 2025

Motion carried with a roll call vote.

Motion made by B. LeClair seconded by Derby to adopt the proposed rules as recommended by City Attorney and to set dates/times for such sessions for 2025 and changing from 2 to 3 councilmembers with first date of February 19, 2024