

**CITY OF EAGLE LAKE  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
JUNE 12, 2023  
7:30 A.M.**

**CALL TO ORDER**

- Mayor Norton called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

- Council Members present: Garrett Steinberg, Beth Rohrich, Anthony White, John Whittington, and Mayor Lisa Norton.
- Staff present: Public Works Director Andrew Hartman, Police Chief John Kopp, and City Administrator Jennifer Bromeland.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. New Mower for Public Works Department.

- Administrator Bromeland stated that attached to the agenda was pricing obtained by Public Works Director Hartman for a new mower. It was explained that discussion took place at the June 5<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting about leasing a new Bobcat mower and the desire for multiple quotes to be obtained and whether to buy outright, lease, or finance. Administrator Bromeland stated that since the June 5<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting Public Works Director Hartman has obtained additional pricing from Arnold's in Mankato and Kibble Equipment in Mankato and that the purpose of the special meeting today was to review multiple options. It was noted that the subject mower is not scheduled to be replaced for another 5 years and that it is spending more time at the repair shop than in use for mowing. Administrator Bromeland stated that it is recommended that the City either buy outright or lease and that the current interest rate on investments should be considered when contemplating leasing.
- Public Works Director Hartman reviewed the pricing obtained from Bobcat, Arnolds, and Kibble. He explained that his preference is the two speed Bobcat mower due to it being more efficient to be able to go from point A to point B. He also stated that his preference would be a 36 month lease so that we are always covered under a warranty and that the biggest challenge right now is keeping up with repairs and the cost associated with the repairs.
- A motion was made by Council Member White, seconded by Council Member Steinberg, to approve the 36 month lease with Bobcat of Mankato for a new mower.
- Mayor Norton stated that she had some questions and specifically asked for clarification on the quotes from John Deere and noted that they were very different from each other. Public Works Hartman explained that the difference includes one having a 35 horsepower engine and another having a 25 horsepower engine. Discussion took place about each of the quotes. Council Member Rohrich asked if having a two speed is still more efficient than having a trailer to load the mower onto and haul from point A to point B. Mayor Norton acknowledged that it sounded like the consensus is to go with Bobcat but questioned whether buying outright would be a better option since the City would then have an asset versus leasing. Administrator Bromeland stated that the capital outlay fund is healthy but that the concern is that since it wasn't a budgeted expenditure for 2023, that expenditures would be skewed. Council Member Rohrich asked when the next mower needs to be replaced. Public Works Director Hartman responded that the other mower should be replaced in 2024. Council Member Whittington noted the anticipated value at the end of the 36 month lease and buyout amount. Council Member White stated that the current mowers are not best

suited for mowing at the parks and other public property and that the Bobcat mower is a better fit for what is needed.

- The motion carried with Council Members Steinberg, Rohrich, White, Whittington, and Mayor Norton voting in favor.
- Council Member Rohrich asked what will happen to the mower that will be replaced. Public Works Director Hartman said that it will be included on the July City Council meeting agenda to sell on Minn Bid.

2. Resolution Accepting Resignation of Connor Guillemette as Full-Time Officer.

- Administrator Bromeland shared that attached to the agenda was Resolution No. 2023-29, a resolution accepting the resignation of Connor Guillemette from the City of Eagle Lake Police Department. It was noted that the resignation is effective June 21, 2023.
- A motion was made by Council Member Whittington, and seconded by Council Member White, to regrettably accept the resignation of Connor Guillemette from the City of Eagle Lake Police Department, effective June 21, 2023.
- The motion was carried with Council Members Steinberg, Rohrich, White, Whittington, and Mayor Norton voting in favor.

3. Police Department Staffing Challenges.

- Administrator Bromeland stated that she wanted to provide a staffing update and make the City Council aware that police department staffing challenges persist. She stated that a fourth full-time officer position was added to the 2023 budget but that we aren't getting applications. She went on to note that the current staffing challenge is not unique to Eagle Lake and that as of today, there are over 150 openings on the POST board for law enforcement positions. Eagle Lake is competing against larger jurisdictions with more resources to fill positions. It was explained that across the board in law enforcement, there is a shortage of applicants and not enough people going into the profession to fill the positions needed and people exiting the field. Administrator Bromeland said that they have reached out to area colleges with law enforcement programs to share information about Eagle Lake Police Department openings and to highlight some of the advantages of working in a smaller community like Eagle Lake such as more opportunities for community policing, low crime, and proximity to Mankato. City staff continues to actively advertise for the positions. Administrator Bromeland shared that she and Chief Kopp will continue working with the Personnel Committee to try and stay on top of staffing issues and that the purpose of the staffing update is to be transparent and keep the City Council informed of staffing challenges.
- Council Member White asked about the possibility of offering sign on bonuses or incentives to retain officers.
- Administrator Bromeland responded that there will be one-time public safety money coming possibly in December to help cities like Eagle Lake be able to offer hiring and retention incentives.
- Council Member Whittington said that everything is on the table at this point and we need to look at incentives, hourly pay, working environment, areas that we can improve such as retaining and training. It was noted that Administrator Bromeland will be meeting with the officer that is leaving to find out what we can be doing better.
- Council Member Steinberg commented that he is concerned that we have a revolving door of police officers. He stated that we are next to Mankato and we should be an attractive place for officers wanting to work.
- Mayor Norton stated that we need to look at the bigger picture and focus on the positives but that at the end of the day, money talks and we need to have more competitive pay. Cities are being forced to take drastic measures and offer hiring incentives and we are not at that point but need to do something different.
- Council Member Whittington commented that pay is one factor but that looking at coverage is needed too.

- Council Member White noted that in addition to pay, what the City is offering for benefits should also be considered.
- Council Member Whittington responded that benefits mean different things to different people at different stages in their life but that he would like to see a comprehensive plan from the police chief about what is needed.
- Council Member Rohrich stated that on-call is a problem and limits police officers in having time off and away from Eagle Lake.
- Mayor Norton brought up pay and questioned whether it is enough for officers to pay for housing in Eagle Lake and whether we need to have housing incentives.
- Council Member Steinberg expressed concern with scheduling issues and asked why there are abrupt changes to the schedule. He stated that everything needs to be looked at it.
- Council Member Whittington said that not only do we need to fill the two openings we have now but what is the contingency plan if we were to lose another officer. What are the options and who can help us if we are down officers.
- Administrator Bromeland stated that there have been ongoing issues with police staffing and that it is expected that Eagle Lake is a stepping stone for new officers entering the profession but that with the demand for full-time officers many new officers now have more opportunities to go to larger departments quicker and no longer need to work in a smaller community to get experience as has been the case in recent years. It was noted that there's really no such thing as part-time officers anymore because there's such a demand for full-time officers and that there used to be a constant revolving door with part-time officers until they obtained full-time positions. It was also noted that larger departments have more opportunities for career advancement within the law enforcement profession as opposed to smaller departments such as Eagle Lake where we only have a police chief and full-time officer positions. Administrator Bromeland stated that if there is a 911 call and we don't have an officer on duty that law enforcement will respond via the emergency on-call agreement with Blue Earth County. It was explained that if we have a reduction in officers, we will see a reduction in time that squads are visible in the community patrolling.
- Council Member Rohrich commented that from a safety perspective, overtime is a concern and making sure officers are well rested.
- Mayor Norton asked if overtime is way up.
- Administrator Bromeland stated that overtime will likely be up this year overall but that it is not being purposely scheduled because we want to be mindful of and prevent burnout and make sure officers are well rested and safe and can take time off. It was explained that at the present time, overtime typically occurs when an officer is on-call and gets called in and there is an automatic two hour callout which is compensated as overtime and also in situations where an officer is involved with a call that is ongoing when their normally scheduled shift ends and they have to work longer.
- Council Member Steinberg stated that he would like a contingency plan in writing.
- Council Member Whittington said that the Police Chief is responsible for putting together a contingency plan and presenting it.
- Chief Kopp stated that his plan is to go to 12 hour shifts to get the best coverage we can with the staff that we have and that we will utilize Blue Earth County for on-call as needed. He said that he will have coverage during the busiest times when we have the most calls.
- Mayor Norton asked Chief Kopp if he had any concerns with putting together a contingency plan and presenting it to the City Council at the July 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Chief Kopp said that wouldn't be an issue.
- Chief Kopp stated that one of his colleagues reached out and is having the same issue and that they are increasing their pay substantially.

- Council Member Whittington said that we need a recruitment, retention, and contingency plan and know what we need for coverage and have a contract with Blue Earth County for backup coverage when needed.
- Council Member Rohrich said that she'd like to see a call log to back up what is being proposed for coverage. She stated that there aren't enough officers for the demand and that we need to look at all options.
- Council Member Steinberg asked about sharing with other cities and exploring all options.
- Council Member Whittington said that we have finite resources and we need to figure out what we can do with what we have.
- Chief Kopp stated that he will investigate it but that Madison Lake is having staffing issues too and asked if we should look at a partnership.
- Mayor Norton stated that she would like to see a draft contingency plan by June 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Administrator Bromeland stated that if anything changes between now and the July 10<sup>th</sup> meeting then a special meeting can be scheduled and that she and Chief Kopp will stay in frequent communication with the Personnel Committee and advise if there are any updates to staffing.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

- Council Member Rohrich moved, seconded by Council Member Whittington, to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 a.m. The motion carried with Council Members Steinberg, Rohrich, White, Whittington, and Mayor Norton voting in favor.

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Lisa Norton, Mayor

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Jennifer J. Bromeland, City Administrator