

Proceedings of the Ironwood City Commission

A Regular Meeting of the Ironwood City Commission was held in person and via Zoom for the public at 5:30 P.M., along with a Work Session at 5:00 P.M, and a Public Hearing at 5:25 P.M. on Monday, April 11, 2022.

1. Mayor Corcoran called the public hearing to order at 5:25 P.M.
2. Recording of the Roll.

PRESENT: Commissioner Andresen, Korpela, Mildren, Semo, and Mayor Corcoran.
ABSENT: None.

3. Public Hearing: To receive public comment on Ordinance #534, an Ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances, City of Ironwood, Michigan, by adding a new division to Chapter 2, Administration, which new division shall be designated as Division 4 of said Code entitled “Human Relations and Equity Committee”.

City Manager Scott Erickson stated the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) group has been working on the proposed ordinance and the framework to set up this committee, with the intent that the five-member committee will be appointed by the City Commission to help the City move forward with DEI items. Carol Erickson was present to represent the DEI group.

Carol Erickson answered questions and concerns of City Commissioners. Clarification was given regarding Section 2-189. Question raised if it should be defined better. It was noted they want to allow for a diverse background, and there is an application process with a letter of interest to apply as outlined in Section 2-190. A comment was made regarding Section 2-192 paragraph (i), the Human Relations and Equity Committee (HREC) shall have access to data, information, and materials. It was asked if a statement should be added “with consent of the City Manager”. It was noted that a consult with City Attorney is already included in the ordinance to insure protection of any “private” data. If DEI issues occur in the future, there would be mechanisms in place to deal with those issues effectively.

Sean Day, a new citizen to Ironwood, commented he does not understand what is so important to try and diversify. It should happen naturally. There is a housing problem now. How will everyone make a living. Where will they live. Should we support them. He referred to violence and riots in past cities he has lived in. He also stated there is nothing wrong with being a Yooper or the culture. Anyone is welcome but why is it being pushed. The vision statement was referred to. He questioned the matter of two members not from Ironwood being allowed to serve on the committee. He stated he is all for inclusion and has not seen any problems in Ironwood. Everyone is friendly. He wonders what exactly we’re doing here.

Mayor Corcoran thanked Mr. Day and noted that the composition of the group is trying to make sure we are fair and equal to all folks who come to Ironwood. We try not to discriminate, whether it’s intentional or not. Try to look at wordings and how we present ourselves.

Steve Frank of Ironwood commented that the proposed ordinance is a template that is used in much larger communities than ours. Their committees are also tied to the investigatory arm of actual anti-discrimination statutes. Ironwood has no such statutes nor should they. State and federal laws are more than sufficient for a small town. Those statutes list specific actions that are illegal. Governments enforce laws that require or prohibit actions. In democracies, governments do not enforce feelings or try to control what people think. He is opposed to any ordinance such as this in Ironwood and stated he is embarrassed that it has reached the level of public comment. This is an ordinance, a legal document. It bothers to define session day as whenever the committee meets, and session day is not even mentioned anywhere else in the ordinance. But words such as honor, goodness, and equity. People have debated those meanings for thousands of years. He has yet to find two DEI website definitions of equity that match. It is especially disturbing considering to even get on this committee, applicants must submit a letter outlying their interest, belief, and commitment to positively dealing with diversity-related issues and topics. He questioned which version is being used. No group should be granted special access to city staff, city resources, or city documents, especially one offering such a poor solution to either imaginary or governmentally irrelevant local government problems.

Mayor Corcoran thanked Mr. Frank. No further public comments were received.

4. Mayor Corcoran closed the public hearing at 5:45 P.M.

A. Mayor Corcoran called the regular meeting to order at 5:45 P.M.

B. Recording of the Roll.

PRESENT: Commissioner Andresen, Korpela, Mildren, Semo, and Mayor Corcoran

ABSENT: None.

C. Approval of the Consent Agenda. *

*1) Approval of Minutes – Regular City Commission Meeting Minutes of March 28, 2022.

*2) Review and Place on File:

a. Downtown Ironwood Development Authority (DIDA) Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2021, December 16, 2021, January 27, 2022, February 24, 2022.

b. Ironwood Housing Commission Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2022.

*3) Approve Sale of:

a. Ironwood American Legion Auxiliary, Unit #5-Poppy Sale Fundraiser on May 19 & 20, 2022.

Commissioner Semo suggested that the most current minutes from each committee should be presented in the Consent Agenda every meeting instead of multiple months at one time. City Manager Scott Erickson agreed to have Commissioners current on the various committee minutes is the goal and will relay information to each committee.

Motion was made by Semo, seconded by Mildren, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Unanimously passed by roll call vote.

D. Approval of the Agenda:

Motion was made by Semo, seconded by Korpela, and carried to approve the Agenda as presented.

E. Citizens wishing to address the Commission on Items on the Agenda. (Three Minute Limit).

Steve Frank addressed Item O, establishing rates for the compost site. He stated the City used to have spring and fall curbside pickup of yard waste. Now they are being asked to haul it themselves and pay for disposal. He noted this is what he pays taxes for, and this will lead to people storing debris in yards longer or dump it in any lot. He questioned what the projected costs to run this would be, including the cost of an attendant. Why complicate everything. It should be free for residents, as well as people from out-of-town because it's not worth enforcing. It should be free for Ironwood businesses because they pay a much higher tax rate. He agreed to charge for out-of-town businesses. This would create an incentive for a business to locate in Ironwood.

F. Citizens wishing to address the Commission on Items not on the Agenda (Three Minute Limit)

Steve Frank stated back in and around 2018, for several years a volunteer group put in a downtown ice rink that has since been torn down. They built it, they maintained it, and tore it down every year. They even had lights on it. There was so little support from the City that they quit, and that's a separate issue that needs to be talked about. He found out today that no one from that group ever received a letter or a certificate of appreciation from the City or the DIDA. It is several years late, but it should be rectified now.

G. PRESENTATION: Jason Alonen, City Assessor and Blight Officer,
(RE: City Blight Process)

A presentation was given by City Assessor and Blight Officer, Jason Alonen. On average, there are over 250 blight notices per year. Blight enforcement is also supported by Ironwood Public Safety. Public Safety Officers are each assigned to a specific area to patrol, where they will stop and talk to residents in their neighborhood on blight-related issues. The process was explained, starting with letter notifications, public hearings, resolutions, and notification of abatement. Examples / photos of blight were shown. There is no grant money in use currently, but Community Development Director Tom Bergman is constantly on the look-out for grants. Approximately 70% of notices sent result in clean-up after the first notice. There was concern from the City Commission about how long the full process takes, which is approximately three months. It was noted by City Staff that the City really does need to give the opportunity and time to residents as they have personal property rights. A building located on McLeod Avenue was also addressed, noting that this building is now privately owned, and the Building Inspector has sent a notice to the owner regarding renovations and their intent with the building. The City Commission thanked Jason Alonen for the presentation.

OLD BUSINESS

- H. Discuss and consider adopting Ordinance #534, an Ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances, City of Ironwood, Michigan, by adding a new division to Chapter 2, Administration, which new division shall be designated as Division 4 of said Code entitled “Human Relations and Equity Committee”.

City Commission noted the citizens have addressed Ordinance #534 in the Public Hearing. In summary, it is asking the City to be inclusive of the people who are here. Diversity is already here. This is striving for inclusion.

Motion was made by Semo, seconded by Korpela to adopt Ordinance #534, an Ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances, City of Ironwood, Michigan, by adding a new division to Chapter 2, Administration, which new division shall be designated as Division 4 of said Code entitled “Human Relations and Equity Committee”.

ROLL CALL:

Yes (4): Commissioners Andresen, Korpela, Mildren, and Semo
No (1): Mayor Corcoran

Motion carried on a 4 to 1 vote.

- I. Discuss and consider awarding a bid to Lulich Implement of Mason, Wisconsin for the purchase of two (2) new Tractor/Mowers for the City Department of Public Works and the Michigan Western Gateway Trail Authority (second tractor to be funded by the MWGTA).

City Manager Scott Erickson noted that the two tractor mowers will be purchased from the equipment fund, with the MWGTA reimbursing the City for one tractor mower upon invoice being submitted to the MWGTA. He further explained that there were four vendors who provided bids for the proposal. After reviewing the various proposals and multiple options provided with the City Department of Public Works, the vendor that most closely met the bid specifications and most competitive price was Lulich Implement with a price of \$60,434.87 per tractor (which includes a four-wheel drive diesel tractor, rotary broom for sweeping, loader bucket and mid PTO flail mower). He noted there was one other bid that was a little lower in cost, but it included a mower that would not be big enough. Recommendation is to authorize the purchase of two Kubota tractor/mowers from Lulich Implement in the amount of \$60,434.87 per tractor. It was confirmed there are resources with MWGTA to reimburse the City of Ironwood timely, upon receiving an invoice from the City.

Motion was made by Mildren, seconded by Korpela, to award a bid to Lulich Implement of Mason, Wisconsin for the purchase of two (2) new Tractor/Mowers for the City Department of Public Works and the Michigan Western Gateway Trail Authority (second tractor to be funded by the MWGTA). Unanimously passed by roll call vote.

- J. Discuss and consider awarding a bid to Nasi Construction, LLC for the replacement of

damaged metal siding on the northeast end of the City Department of Public Works facility located at 200 Penokee Road.

City Manager Scott Erickson noted the City received two bids. With labor and supply costs being what they are currently, it is a challenging bidding climate right now. The Nasi Construction, LLC bid came in lower.

***Motion** was made by Mildren, seconded by Korpela, to authorize a bid to Nasi Construction, LLC in the amount of \$129,910.58 for the replacement of damaged metal siding on the northeast end of the City Department of Public Works facility located at 200 Penokee Road. Unanimously passed by roll call vote.*

NEW BUSINESS

K. Discuss and consider authorizing bids for miscellaneous watermain fitting and valve replacements for the U.S. Highway 2 / Florence Street area.

City Manager Scott Erickson noted this is a smaller project. Part of this area was installed in the 1980's but what occurred, after talking to EGLE, was a bad shipment of bolts that year, so the City has replaced a number of the bolts. The five locations in this project are much more complicated and consist of a deep water main and ground water issues. One area is right on US 2 which requires a lane closure. It is being recommended to put it out for bid. It has become quite complicated to eliminate the problems.

***Motion** was made by Semo, seconded by Mildren, and carried to authorize bids for miscellaneous watermain fitting and valve replacements for the U.S. Highway 2 / Florence Street area.*

L. Discuss and consider approving a professional services agreement with Coleman Engineering Company for miscellaneous watermain fitting and valve replacements for the U.S. Highway 2 / Florence Street area.

City Manager Scott Erickson stated the five locations would be covered with this professional services agreement, including a full design, rebuild, and permitting.

***Motion** was made by Mildren, seconded by Korpela, approving a professional services agreement with Coleman Engineering Company for miscellaneous watermain fitting and valve replacements for the U.S. Highway 2 / Florence Street area. Unanimously passed by roll call vote.*

M. Discuss and consider authorizing bids for tank cleaning at the Mt. Zion and Jessieville water tanks as well as the clear well at the Pump Station.

Utility Manager Bob Tervonen stated approximately every three years he gets a company here to clean the water storage tanks. If bids are authorized, he will bring bids back for City Commission approval. Last time, it was about \$8,700 to do two of the tanks.

Motion was made by Semo, seconded by Andresen, and carried to authorize bids for tank cleaning at the Mt. Zion and Jessierville water tanks as well as the clear well at the Pump Station.

- N. Discuss and consider approving the lease/service agreement renewal with Peak Communication, LLC/Avaya Financial Services for a five (5) year term to provide phone service and authorize City Clerk to sign same.

City Clerk Wendy Hagstrom stated the renewal of the lease with Avaya Financial Services and Peak Communication would be for another five-year term with no increase in cost. The monthly payment would remain at \$252 a month which would include an upgrade in IP Office, system support, and installation of new phones compatible with the updates. City Staff are satisfied with the Avaya phone system and service that has been provided the last five years and would like to keep that service in place.

Motion was made by Semo, seconded by Korpela, approving the lease/service agreement renewal with Peak Communication, LLC/Avaya Financial Services for a five (5) year term to provide phone service and authorize City Clerk to sign same. Unanimously passed by roll call vote.

- O. Discuss and consider establishing 2022 rates for the City of Ironwood Compost Site.

City Manager Scott Erickson addressed establishing rates for the Compost site and the need to get control of it. The capacity of the site would have been gone in a year or two. Last year contractors came to chip and re-shape the site for proactive composting that can hopefully be managed long term. Most cities do not provide this service, and this is a unique service. It helps as a service with blight issues. Staff took a ride to Manitowish Waters, Wisconsin to look at what they are doing and are trying to tailor our rates after what Manitowish Waters is doing. Branches would be in one area. Every year or two, a tub grinder company came in to grind any wood items. Clarification was noted that for leaves brought to the compost site, there would no charge. That service would be free. A chipper will cost about \$10,000 every time you bring them in and manage it. The Compost Site was having other items, i.e., couches, coming in before an attendant was present. Again, no one else in our area provides this service. The proposed rates will not handle the whole cost. The budget was \$15,000 - \$20,000 a year, in years past. It comes out of the general fund. It is a big expense, but fees can offset this and make it manageable. We want people to still use the site. The charge is only for tree materials and branches. Tree companies did work with the City on this and are supportive of a managed site. A fee structure was proposed, but it will still cost general fund money to manage. This can be analyzed after a year or two, but this can properly manage the site. Commission questioned a sliding scale fee for residents. City Manager stated it would be hard until the City could get one year in and have some data and evaluate it then. Commission questioned if a resident wanted to take compost, could they ask the attendant what is available. It was confirmed that compost and woodchips, when available for residents, will be at no charge. It was further noted the rates can come back to the Commission for discussion to change at any time.

Motion was made by Mildren, seconded by Semo, to establish 2022 rates for the City of Ironwood Compost Site, as described in City of Ironwood Compost Site 2022 Fee Schedule. Unanimously passed by roll call vote.

P. Discuss and consider area-wide motel survey.

City Manager Scott Erickson addressed this request, noting it is a hotel feasibility study that can be used as a tool for attracting a hotel developer to our area or for the potential expansion of existing hotel facilities. This would apply to both commercial districts, highway and downtown. The request is for \$12,500 to provide the study and would come from the general fund/fund balance. This ties in well with the downtown development plan as well as the highway if facilities are looking to locate here. Year-round recreational opportunities are out there now. Commission questioned why we need to spend money on a study. The City Manager noted developers want studies to look at the data and see if the market is there. Should they invest. It's a tool necessary if you want to attract this type of development.

***Motion** was made by Andresen, seconded by Mildren, to authorize an area-wide motel survey – hotel feasibility study. Unanimously passed by roll call vote.*

Q. Manager's Report

City Manager Scott B. Erickson verbally gave the Manager's report noting the following items:

* The water treatment plant design is complete and sent to EGLE for the final permit. This should be done by the end of month, then approval from USDA Rural Development to go out to bid will take place, and then they will bring it back. He further stated he is unsure how the bids will come back with the climate out there. This is an April/May timeframe.

* Francis Street full reconstruction project is out for bidding right now. It has been designed. There is a neighborhood / public meeting at the Memorial Building on Tuesday, April 12th, to talk through construction process and what the citizens in the neighborhood need to anticipate. Bids will go to the Commission when they come back.

* Spring Clean-Up and drop off day has been scheduled. The location once again is behind Ironwood Public Safety and takes place Friday April 29th, from 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. and Saturday April 30th from 8:00 – 11:00 a.m. Dumpsters will be there. Residents will unload themselves. Commission inquired about reaching out to JROTC, maybe just a handful of students to assist. City Manager stated they are trying to balance what the public expectation is, but they can reach out to JROTC as a few people would be helpful. It is still encouraged for the public to bring resources for unloading.

* The High School has approached the City to put up graduation banners on street poles. Other communities have done it. In the past it was in the Depot Park, but this will be a big undertaking to get up on the street poles. The City is committed to doing it and trying this year. They will be displayed two weeks before graduation and two weeks after.

* The Drinking Water Asset Management (DWAM) grant consists of partial grant funding to explore water service line material types. The City does have galvanized service lines and is required to go in and identify those locations to obtain an accurate number of services lines. Contractor Jakes's excavating will be doing this exploratory work. There is a pre-construction meeting this week. This will take place randomly around town.

*The development of the online reservation system for the Curry Park Campground is in process and will hopefully be going live in a few more weeks. Training on the system is scheduled this week. Other local campgrounds for Gogebic County and Iron County using this system have stated this increased their park usage.

R. Other Matters.

Mayor Corcoran noted Republic Services/Eagle Waste have had internal struggles. Pick-up is still not completely done. Consideration of an offset for some of the costs to the citizens for their inconvenience should be addressed. City Manager Scott Erickson stated it will be brought back to the next City Commission meeting for discussion.

Commissioner Mildren wanted to address a Public Service Announcement he heard on the Marquette news. There are scams on the internet related to rentals in the Upper Peninsula. He suggested to contact a realtor or Public Safety if in question. There are also scams involving chatting with high school students who are being blackmailed for payments. Parents should monitor use of the internet.

S. Adjournment.

***Motion** was made by Semo, seconded by Mildren, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 p.m.*

Kim S. Corcoran, Mayor

Wendy L. Hagstrom, City Clerk