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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
April 10, 2024**

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Amber Thibeault; Vice President; Marcus Certa, Clerk; Andrew Brown, Elaine Haney.

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Ricky Jones, Public Works Director; Brad Luck, EJRP Director; Chelsea Mandigo, Water Quality Superintendent; Jess Morris, Finance Director;

OTHERS PRESENT: Alise Certa, Resa, Sarah Reeves, Dennis Thibeault

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Councilor Thibeault called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. She began by noting that the City Council has had several meetings that were disrupted by anti-Semitic and racist hate speech, and that this type of speech is not tolerated and is condemned by the Council. She said that while it may not always be possible to prevent hate speech from occurring during public comments, the City Council will take measures to make it more difficult to express such views.

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

None needed.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from public on items not on the agenda
None.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. Discussion & Consideration of FY25 Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD) Budget
Councilor Certa noted that his wife is an employee of CSWD and as such, feels that it presents a conflict of interest for him, and he said that he will recuse himself from tonight's discussion.

CSWD Executive Director Reeves provided an overview of the FY25 budget for the Council's review and consideration. She began by noting the three main sources of CSWD's revenue, which are user fees, material and product sales, and solid waste management fees, adding that they do not receive revenue from local sales or property taxes. She spoke about CSWD's projected FY25 income of \$15.9 million, anticipated to come from solid waste management fees, tipping fees, the sale of materials, and, to a lesser degree, from product stewardship and reimburseables, grant revenue, and interest and dividends. She spoke about CSWD's projected FY25 expenses of \$16.08 million, the bulk of which are related to payroll expenses (38%) and materials management (43%), with other contributing costs associated with property management, promotion and education, community support, travel and training, administrative costs, and professional fees. She said that based on this, they are projecting a budget shortfall of approximately \$287,000. She spoke about FY25 compared to FY24's budget, noting that while revenue is projected to increase by 3.6%, expenses are anticipated to increase by 11.7%. She said that much of the expense increase is related to equipment and fleet increased costs, related to CSWD's aging infrastructure. She said that this shortfall would be covered by drawing approximately \$287,000 from CSWD's reserve fund. She noted that CSWD's board approved a solid waste management fee increase (the first in 12 years) from \$27 per ton to \$30 per ton, which will impact

54 households by an approximately \$0.28 per month increase. She noted that this charge is only on waste,
55 not compost, recycling, or scrap. She said that they also approved an increase in the tip fee in the
56 recycling facility to \$90 per ton, which helps cover equipment expenses for the aging facility, and also
57 budgeted \$250,000 in operating expenses to cover equipment repair and replacement. She noted that
58 there was no increase in tip fees for the organics recycling facility, nor increases in fees at drop off
59 centers. She spoke briefly about upcoming capital projects and fund equity.

60
61 Councilor Brown asked about the contamination policy for compost and organics, and Executive Director
62 Reeves said that the goal of this policy is to be able to work with haulers and identify areas where
63 contamination is a problem and conduct education with clients so that contamination is mitigated. She
64 said that the fine associated with contamination is designed to incentivize them to work with clients to
65 decrease contamination.

66
67 Executive Director Reeves noted revenue around the community cleanup fund and that each community
68 has access to this funding to conduct cleanup activities in their communities.

69
70 **Councilor Brown made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, to approve the Chittenden Solid**
71 **Waste District FY25 budget as presented. The motion passed 3-0.**

72
73 b. Discussion & Consideration of FY25 Enterprise Fund Operating and Capital Budgets for Water,
74 Wastewater, Sanitation, and EJRP Program Fund; and Warn Public Hearing for Utility Rates
75 Finance Director Morris noted that this is the second presentation of enterprise budgets for FY25 for the
76 City. She noted that the original estimated combined utility rate increase was approximately 6.5% and
77 that this estimate has been revised to a 2.67% increase (or \$17.52 per year on an average bill). She
78 noted that this change was driven by smaller increases in the water and wastewater budgets than
79 originally projected. She noted that the sanitation fund's capital transfer increased by \$55,000 from the
80 original budget presentation, resulting in an increase of 3.89% (rather than the original 1.94% increase).
81 She noted that this transfer was the result of an underfunded reserve and some upcoming work needed
82 on capital projects that would put the capital reserve fund into negative territory.

83
84 Councilor Thibeault asked whether there is any way of transferring funding to the sanitation fund's capital
85 reserves to ensure a positive balance. Finance Director Morris replied that if the City were to increase
86 the capital funds transfer in FY25 by another \$22,000 (for a total transfer of \$172,000), and increase by
87 \$50,000 more in transfers over the next five years, it would then put the fund into the positive. She said
88 that this would in turn increase rates by 6.53% or \$10.36 per year.

89
90 Councilor Certa asked about estimated revenues in wastewater, noting that they were developed with
91 FY23 data and asked if there is more recent data. Finance Director Morris noted that the preliminary
92 budgets were developed using the most recent FY24 data to date, which was through January at the
93 time. She noted that there have been issues with flow meters for Williston and the Town of Essex,
94 resulting in inaccurate flow data for the last three months of FY24, as well as several significant storm
95 events that have also impacted recent flow data. She said that due to this, they decided to produce an
96 estimate for FY25 based on past average utilization. Councilor Certa expressed concerns that other
97 municipalities are not metering everything that should be metered, and that the City should work to more
98 accurately meter its own flows to ensure it has the most accurate data. Councilor Brown asked who is
99 responsible for the cost of metering other towns' pump stations, and Water Quality Superintendent
100 Mandigo replied that other municipalities would bear the costs for installing flow meters. She noted that
101 once the Town installs a flow meter at the Susie Wilson jug-handle in the next year, it will allow the City
102 to know how much is the Town's flow and how much is the City's flow.

Councilor Thibeault expressed support for increasing the capital transfer to the sanitation budget. Other Councilors concurred.

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Brown, to approve the FY25 Enterprise Fund operating and capital budgets for Water, Wastewater, Sanitation, and EJRP Program Fund as presented, including the modification to the sanitation fund presented by Finance Director Morris. The motion passed 4-0.

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Brown, to warn a public hearing on May 22, 2024 for FY25 rate setting for the Water, Wastewater and Sanitation funds. The motion passed 4-0.

6. CONSENT ITEMS

- a. Approve Meeting Minutes: March 27, 2024
- b. Acting as Liquor Control Commission: Liquor License Approvals
- c. Approve Letter of Intent to Participate in Grants in Aid Program
- d. Approve Clarification of Tree Farm Management Group Board Composition
- e. Approve Tree Farm Management Group Management Agreement Amendments
- f. Approve July 4th Fireworks Display Permit – EJRP

Councilor Brown made a motion, seconded by Councilor Certa, to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed 4-0.

7. COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Mahony noted that there is an Amtrak platform project occurring currently, which would create a raised platform 8 inches above the track level. She noted that it started on April 3 and is anticipated to take approximately one year. She noted that there may be changes to the passenger waiting area and parking occasionally throughout the life of the construction project. She also noted that contractors have resumed work on the Crescent Connector project. She said that there will be signage indicating road/parking access and closures. She further noted that the City's Tree City USA application was approved for this year. She noted that Public Works has begun work to fix lawns damaged as a result of snow removal.

Councilor Haney asked whether the report on the Senior Center has been shared with the seniors, and City Manager Mahony replied that it has. Councilor Haney asked for an update on the Community Advisory Board position activities with the Police Department. City Manager Mahony replied that there is still a vacant position on that board, and that they are conducting broad recruitment activities for vacancies on volunteer boards later this spring. Councilor Haney congratulated Councilor Thibeault on her re-election, Councilor-elect Miller on his election, and thanked Councilor Brown for his years of service on the City Council and Village Trustees.

8. READING FILE

- a. Check Warrant #24041, 04/05/2024
- b. March Financial Reports
- c. Senior Programming Update
- d. Five-year Stormwater Management Plan
- e. Anaerobic Digester – WWTF Budget Supplement
- f. Feedback for VTrans on Susie Wilson Road Scoping Study and Rt 15 Paving Request
- g. DRB Meeting Minutes – 3/21/2024
- h. PCAB Meeting Minutes - 3/19/2024

154 i. TAC Meeting Minutes – 9/19/2024
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156 9. **ADJOURN**
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158 **Councilor Brown made a motion, seconded by Councilor Certa, to adjourn the meeting. The**
159 **motion passed 4-0 at 7:23 P.M.**
160

161 Respectfully Submitted,
162 Amy Coonradt