

Osakis City Council – Special Meeting
January 21, 2021
7:00 PM

Present: Dan Wessel, Tim Thornbloom, Alan Larson, Laura Backes, Randy Anderson

Absent: None

Others Present: Angela Jacobson, Rodger Larson, Kevin Haglund, Lee Lueth, Reenie Goodwin, Brad Zimmer, Jim Snyder, Rick Loxercamp

The January 21st, 2021 meeting was called to order by Mayor Dan Wessel at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call was taken.

Motion by Anderson, seconded by Larson, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion Carries

Project #482: COVID-19/Cares Funds

Clerk Jacobson searched through documents to find what is allowed and what was not allowed to use Covid Cares funds for. What was found from the auditors and state was that an answer was given but then the answers changed daily.

Jacobson explained that this was a very frustrating process of trying to follow the rules within a short window of time and figure out what funds could be used for as the information was given. The information was given but then it would change. An example was at the start of COVID, work-comp was absolutely a no for using, and now it is ok for public safety.

The use of funds were not to be included in the current budget year so no one paid during that period. Now cares funds can be used for public safety payroll. This changed nine times during the process and with the most recent coming out after the deadline. Was a very frustrating process.

To top this, we had a pandemic to address and executive order after order to 100 plus orders to apply to the city and daily operations for the city employees, time off and the mask requirement and shut downs.

Jacobson stated that this was done with very little help from anyone else in the city. She would of thought that the Emergency Management Responders would take the control and do what is needed for the city – but Jacobson explained that it was left in her lap and feels completely overwhelmed through this process with no help and only criticism for what was done and for what will be done instead of a helping hand.

As this virus moves forward, I would expect help to navigate through the rest of this because Jacobson said she can't do it on her own. Jacobson said she should only be doing the financial side.

A thank you was given to Fire Chief Craig Dropik for taking care of his department and for doing what was required of him and not what he felt he wanted to do.

As this moves forward, Jacobson would expect more of a team approach as she has spent many extra hours on this to do what is right for the city and wanted it correct. One person cannot think or do it all.

Jacobson thanked the council for their patience and understanding as this process has changed and evolved to work through this the best we can.

The reason we are here is on the cares funds. Jacobson has given the cost breakdown of the funds we received and how they were allocated in November 2020. When this was done, we could give funds to public safety – extra funds with no deadline – then Jacobson was told there was a deadline on all of the funds after the January 11, 2021 meeting.

When asked specifics on how to spend the funds, then Jacobson was informed we could not give it to public safety because we do not contract with them and was told that in order to be allowed to spend funds after November 15, 2020, they must be spent and expected by then. However, that had again changed to as long as the city was contracting to get services, then it would qualify – but we only have until February 15, 2021 to spend them. So the project would be paid for.

After many phone calls to the state, auditors, League of MN Cities, clerks, county and other cities, Jacobson found out that payroll costs for public safety substantially directed to mitigate during COVID could be used. Payroll, health insurance, taxes, and PERA could be paid by those funds for public safety personnel.

With this being said, there are some decisions to be made:

- See original allocation #1 – the extra funds to the Police, Fire Department and First Responders. We could use the allowance to use public safety wages for cares funds allocation and the extra in the budget could go to these departments. The Fire Department has placed an order. Police did not order but can use what was already spent. No order yet from the First Responders.
- See new allocation amounts #2 – city hall is being done. Funds to meet the guideline would need to be paid by February 15, 2021 or could be allocated to be moved to public safety wages and use up all the cares funds that way. The budgeted items would then be used for the expenses to finish them up or a portion of both.
- Help the businesses – Jacobson did talk to AAEDA and if we give some funds to them, we can ask AAEDA to allocate those funds to Osakis businesses. We can do some extra funds in the budget or from Liquor Store profits for 2021 or a combination we like. The EDA will meet on Monday to discuss this – but they do not have access to these funds, only the council does. Council will discuss as they move forward.

Motion by Backes, seconded by Anderson, to allocate the extra funds to the Fire Department, Police Department and First Responders. Motion Carries

Motion by Anderson seconded by Thornbloom to allow to modify the designation of cares funds to Police Department wages, benefits, PERA, taxes for the cares funds as allowed to cover the needed costs we had allocated.

Other Items for Council Discussion:

Council received a letter regarding medical marijuana and the requirements.

The council discussed and stated our policy currently states the employee must not use drugs or alcohol or be under the influence while on city property or in the possession of drugs or alcohol and the employees would agree to no use to protect the city or they will be terminated. Council was fine with hiring a part time employee with these rules and expectation.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.