

CITY OF BIRCHWOOD VILLAGE  
207 BIRCHWOOD AVENUE  
BIRCHWOOD, MINNESOTA

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 25, 2023, 6:00 P.M.

**MEMBERS:**

Margaret Ford	Mayor
Mark Foster	Councilmember
Ryan Hankins	Councilmember
Justin McCarthy	Councilmember
Katherine Weier	Councilmember

**STAFF:**

H. Alan Kantrud	City Attorney
Rebecca Kellen	City Administrator
Mary Cahill	City Treasurer
Marcus Johnson	City Engineer, Bolton & Menk (until 6:53 p.m.)

**GUESTS:**

John Manship                      Water Department

Minutes prepared by Angela Fracassi of Minutes Solutions from a video recording.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Ford called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (0:00:15)**

On a motion made by Councilmember McCarthy, seconded by Councilmember Foster, it was resolved to approve the agenda as amended. All in favor; motion carried.

**4. OPEN PUBLIC FORUM (0:00:20)**

On a motion made by Councilmember McCarthy, seconded by Councilmember Foster, it was resolved to close the open public forum. All in favor; motion carried.

**5. VISIT TO WILDWOOD LIFT STATION (0:01:22)**

Council temporarily paused the meeting for a brief site visit at Wildwood Lift Station. Mayor Ford reconvened the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

6. **CITY BUSINESS**

- a. **Wildwood Lift Station (0:02:08):** City Engineer Johnson provided a summary of the different options for the Wildwood Lift Station. Council agreed that they did not want to extend the lift station into the Boulevard. Engineer Johnson stated that his final recommendation would be submitted in approximately two weeks, after listening to City Council and the public.

Mayor Ford opened the floor to public comment.

**Don Hankins, 165 Wildwood,** noted that his home had flooded when the lift station failed, and wanted to see the right decision made.

**Cory Hankins, 165 Wildwood,** expressed her preference for not having the boulevard extended.

**Councilmember Weier** expressed a preference for keeping the lift station on the grassy area and off the street to maintain easy maintenance access.

**Councilmember McCarthy** expressed a preference for keeping the lift station off of the beach as much as possible.

**Councilmember Hankins** inquired if the station could be placed adjacent to the existing generator.

**Engineer Johnson** stated that the generator would need to be moved.

7. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. **Approve Resolution 2023-39 – Lift Station (0:19:59):**

On a motion made by Councilmember McCarthy, seconded by Councilmember Weier, it was resolved to authorize work by Bolton and Menk and Braun for the Wildwood Lift Station replacement project. All in favor; motion carried.

- b. **Approve Revised July Meeting Minutes (00:21:27):** Councilmember McCarthy asked that the minutes be revised to better reflect the exact motion that was made regarding item 4.

- c. **City Street Project Update (00:23:00):** Engineer Johnson provided a document that outlined several proposed street replacements and/or overlays that should be worked into the City's operating budget. Council noted that Wildwood Avenue was identified as an area of need. Engineer Johnson spoke about the LRIB grant that would cover full construction costs, which is available every several years. He recommended that the grant application come from the City, with his firm's input. If his firm were to write the entire application, they would charge approximately \$7,000. The grant application requires a rough plan and an estimate, but does not require an accepted bid. The application should outline the background of the project and why the community needs the funds.

It was noted that the preliminary cost estimate provided by Engineer Johnson extends about 50 feet past the boulevard. Councilmember Weier expressed a preference for replacing old watermains before replacing the roads.

John Manship, Water Department, explained that it is a good idea to replace the watermains when replacing the roads, if there is sufficient funding available. He recommended using the existing trenches instead of creating a whole new design. He also explained that frost and ground shifting cause watermain breaks rather than the age of the pipes, and noted that even new lines may break if the ground shifts.

The Council discussed whether a large overlay area would be preferable to reconstructing a smaller section of road. Engineer Johnson advised that the grant reviewers may view a road reconstruction as more of a need than an overlay. He also advised that the proposed project should include an area that includes parks, trails, and other public attractions.

Councilmember Hankins volunteered to work closely with Engineer Johnson on the LRIB grant application.

**d. Wildwood Traffic Study (00:52:46):**

**On a motion made by Councilmember McCarthy, seconded by Councilmember Foster, it was resolved to authorize Mayor Ford and Cory Hankins to work with the Washington County Sheriff on a traffic study of Wildwood Avenue. All in favor; motion carried.**

**Cory Hankins, 165 Wildwood**, stated that traffic on Wildwood Avenue has been a concern for many years. She asked that the Council request that the Washington County Sheriff conduct a traffic study to determine speed and number of cars. Mayor Ford reported that they met with the Sheriff today and he had expressed interest. Ms. Hankins also identified the bus stop at Wildwood and Owl as a potentially dangerous area. Mayor Ford responded that the area can be examined when the traffic study data is received.

**e. Finalize Preliminary Budget:**

**On a motion made by Councilmember McCarthy, seconded by Councilmember Hankins, it was resolved to increase the engineering budget by \$12,000. All in favor; motion carried.**

**On a motion made by Councilmember Hankins, seconded by Mayor Ford, it was resolved to approve the preliminary budget as amended. All in favor; motion carried unanimously.**

Council noted that a 30% budget increase may be difficult for the public to accept. Council agreed that there is still a great deal of uncertainty on some budget items, and expressed hope that the final figures will be lower. It was also noted that several grant applications were still in process.

**f. Administrator's Annual Performance Review (1:07:40):** Mayor Ford noted that the administrator's performance review would be conducted in closed session, should Ms. Kellen agree. Ms. Kellen confirmed that she preferred a closed meeting.

**GENERAL EXPLANATION OF OVERALL REVIEW:** Overall there is a sense that she is meeting expectations, generally, but that the areas of communication and team building need improvement, which will in turn allow more effective delegation and once that piece is worked out the City will not be such a stressed and reactive posture with projects and other priorities that really rely on a cohesive and functional office team. The CC is there to support her but needs to be aware of issues as they arise to help, not when it is too late and the matter has to be addressed in "crisis mode".

**8. MEETING CLOSE (1:07:55)**

**On a motion duly made and carried unanimously, it was agreed that there was no further business of the Council to transact in an open session; the meeting was closed to the public at 7:08 p.m.**

**DISCLAIMER**

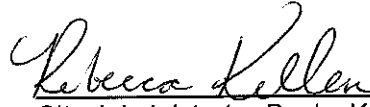
The above minutes should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Margaret Ford

11-14-23

Date



\_\_\_\_\_  
City Administrator Becky Kellen

11-14-23

Date

To: Birchwood Mayor and City Council

From: Bryan and Karin McGinnis  
194 Wildwood Avenue

Date: September 20, 2023

Subject: September 25 Special City Council Meeting On Wildwood Lift Station

We are offering the following comments and questions requesting that they be officially included in the record of the OPEN PUBLIC FORUM item of the September 25 meeting.

We were surprised to see the September 19 email announcement for the September 25 Special City Council Meeting on Wildwood Lift Station with a quite short Notice of the Meeting. With only six days notice and September 25 date not available, we will not be able to attend. A longer notice time might have allowed a change in our schedule. It's not clear if the public is invited on the "walk around" and can offer questions or comments at that time

We are disappointed that not even sketch plan drawings were offered as preliminary possibilities for locations of new lift station equipment although the Engineer's report and City notice say: "Location needs to be determined." and "potential lift station sites", respectively. And the listing of mechanical components is not helpful for anyone to determine what a new facility will look like.

Nowhere in the City's proposed resolution or in the Engineer's report did we find any reference to safety issues. We believe safety, hazards, and health should be formally addressed.

As we heard earlier, if one of the alternative plans for the new lift station is for it to occupy more of the current paved area to the "west" of the current facilities and grass area, we believe that residents on both sides of the Wildwood Park boulevard, as well as a few properties to the "west", should have been individually informed of this possibility and very specifically invited to come and give input. They could then question what would be the impact if the facility extended far enough "west" that no west-bound vehicle could make a u-turn around the end of the boulevard or turn left onto Owl Street, and vehicles going out of Owl Street could be restricted to "one-way" to the "east"? Currently residents' vehicles, delivery vans, school buses, and others use the "two-way"/u-turn options at the Owl Street corner. We are opposed to a loss of this "two-way" capability.

Trucks servicing the lift station now have a reasonable place to temporarily park when the service people are working. Parking on a narrowed Wildwood Ave would create a safety issue with reduced paved area, and parking on Owl Street would not be an option for trucks that have to be very close to the lift station itself.

The issue of noise should be included. Will a new facility be more noisy? ..or less? Does the present emergency electrical generator have to run as long as it does in the periodic tests?

We notice on the Meeting Agenda "CITY BUSINESS C. Traffic Study for Wildwood". We hope that safety is a major consideration. The impact of a new lift station should be included. In the past, speeding vehicles have ended up on the boulevard, with at least one causing damage to lift station parts. We think that there is more of a hazard since there are no longer large snow piles left in the middle of the paved street. When the emergency electrical generator unit was completed, Bryan reported on what he thought was a real danger, i.e. exposed, above ground, natural gas pipes and valves that were quite vulnerable to being hit by an errant vehicle. Only cosmetic improvements were made.

We also hope that the "Traffic Study" includes the impact of Wildwood Avenue being part of the Lake Links Trail. We believe that Wildwood Avenue is not a safe trail. We only hope that the City and residents are not held responsible if there is ever an injury or worse attributed to the Trail being "approved" by the City. We should be sure that City liability insurance would cover such a mishap. On a related note, some time ago we recommended to the City Administrator that the City should be informed whenever there is to be an organized run or bike trek through the City, and that the City, by the email system, inform residents to be alerted on the hours of the event. These precautions have not been taken. Just a couple weeks ago a run through the Village had a water-stand or other stop set up on Wildwood between East County Line and Wildwood Park. (Is this the safest place for a watering station?) We didn't drive that way, but it appeared that tables, etc were partially blocking the street.

Thanks,

Bryan and Karin McGinnis