

Sidney, Nebraska - May 28, 2024, A Fair Housing City

A meeting of the Mayor and Council of the City of Sidney, Nebraska, was convened in an open and public session at 5:30 p.m. on May 28, 2024, in the Council Room. Present in person were: Vice Mayor Strommen and Council Members: Buckner, and Bondegard. Others present: City Manager Scott, City Clerk Borchert, Attorney Leef. Notice of the meeting was given in advance thereof by publication in *The Sidney-Sun Telegraph*, the designated method for giving notice, a copy of the proof of publication being attached to these minutes. Advance notice of the meeting was given to the members of the City Council and a copy of their acknowledgment of receipt of notice is attached to these minutes. Availability of the agenda was communicated in the advance notice and the notice to the City Council. All proceedings shown hereafter were taken while the convened meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

Vice Mayor Strommen informed the public of the location of the posted Open Meetings Act.

Strommen asked for the absence of Mayor Sherman to be approved. Buckner moved, Bondegard seconded, "That Sherman's absence be excused." Roll call: Yeas: Strommen, Buckner, Bondegard, Nays: None. Absent: Sherman, Radcliffe. Motion approved.

Strommen asked for the absence of Councilman Radcliffe to be approved. Bondegard moved, Buckner seconded, "That Radcliffe's absence be excused." Roll call: Yeas: Buckner, Bondegard, Strommen Nays: None. Absent: Sherman, Radcliffe. Motion approved.

Strommen asked for approval of the minutes. Buckner moved, Bondegard seconded, "That the Council minutes from May 14, 2024, be approved." Roll call: Yeas: Strommen, Buckner, Bondegard. Nays: None. Absent: Sherman, Radcliffe. Motion approved.

Barb Perez, Editor of the Sidney-Sun Telegraph, came before Council requesting that Council do an informal town hall meeting concerning the proposed Placer.AI, so the public can hear both sides of why it is good or bad. Perez continued that ultimately the citizens and residents are affected by this. Perez stated that she was not asking to have residents vote for or against it, but was asking Council that it be put before the public to decide.

Paige Kantor, Chamber Board Member, presented the quarterly report. An annual report was given to the Council. Kantor stated that the Chamber had numerous ribbon cuttings and public events. There are several upcoming events as well as ribbon cuttings. There will be a social hour at the Fairfield Inn on June 20. There will be a board meeting on May 29 to discuss the hiring of the Chamber CEO and director. Kantor stated that the housing market is still moving. Kantor also stated that Toshia will be missed.

Kasey Kantor, Transportation Director, came before Council to ask approval of Resolution 20240501, requesting a local match, for \$18,400, for the purchase of two buses. Bondegard asked if the \$18,400 was for both buses. Kantor stated that it was. Strommen asked for a motion. Bondegard moved, Buckner seconded, "That Resolution 20240501, the purchase of two transportation buses, be approved for \$18,400." Roll call: Yeas: Buckner, Bondegard, Strommen Nays: None. Absent: Sherman, Radcliffe. Motion approved.

Brandy Stone, Economic Development Director, stated that item six on the agenda, Economic Development Marketing Tool, Placer.ai, should be tabled due to Sherman and Radcliffe's absence. Strommen stated that he thought that Sherman and Radcliffe should be present and that he would agree that the item be tabled. Strommen asked how City Manager Scott felt about a public forum and how to proceed. Scott stated that he agreed that the item should be tabled until Sherman and Radcliffe could be present. If Council decided to take a different route, they could do it at the next meeting. Buckner stated that he agreed that the other Councilmen should be present and that the community should be involved. Strommen asked for a motion to table. Bondegard moved, Buckner seconded, "That the Economic Development Marketing Tool, Placer.ai, should be tabled until the June 11 Council Meeting." Roll call: Yeas: Bondegard, Strommen, Buckner. Nays: None. Absent: Sherman, Radcliffe. Motion approved.

Stone stated that she would like to apply for a grant within the Rural Community Recovery Program to assist with the expense of building the Northside Park. The City has invited proposals for the Northside Park Revitalization Project Design. The plans will include adding new, ADA-accessible playground equipment, exercise equipment, and multi-use paths through the park. This would include a splash pad and a possible restroom on an approximate 2-acre area of ground. The RCRP program is a one-time fund for grants to political subdivisions in Nebraska to build strong and healthy communities investing in neighborhoods. Stone continued, that the City would be requesting \$800,000 within our grant application. There is no match required with this program. Strommen reiterated, that this is a grant and not a loan to be used for revitalization projects. Scott stated that the City is still applying to the Game and Parks. Strommen asked for a motion to approve the letter of intent. Buckner moved, Bondegard seconded, "That the letter of intent to apply to the State Department of Economic Development to start the paperwork process, be approved." Roll call: Yeas: Strommen, Buckner, Bondegard. Nays: None. Absent: Sherman, Radcliffe. Motion approved.

Scott stated that in December of 2023, Sidney advised MEAN of our intent to not sign the new modified schedule M agreement which opened the door to becoming a contract purchaser. Scott stated that the transition away from the new MEAN schedule M agreement has brought up several complexities and variables that have led both MEAN staff and City staff, J Leef, and Mike Palmer (our current MEAN representative) to come together and propose a waiver to the SSM agreement. This will allow the City to get a better feel for inevitable near-future events without rewriting what it means

to be a contract purchaser and then redoing that agreement again in the next couple of years. Scott stated that the City is in a time constraint and that a decision needs to be made by mid-June. Scott stated that concessions needed to be addressed by both parties. MEAN passed a resolution that they would allow their MEAN board staff to work with City staff and legal council. Mike Palmer stated the City is working with MEAN on a mutually beneficial agreement. The current issue is that there is an RTO (Regional Transmission Organization) coming to the West. It is scheduled to start in April of 2026. Anything the City would do under the contract purchaser situation would get washed away after April 1, 2026, due to the revision of rules. The City started talking with MEAN to see if they could come to an agreement in the interim from now until April 2026, and possibly after. The City needs some flexibility to get this wrapped up. SPP is leading the charge with the RTO and needs to know who our market participant is going to be on the City's behalf, by the middle of June. Strommen asked what the waiver would grant us. Palmer stated that the waiver would allow the City to continue to buy power from MEAN over our contractor purchaser limits. Scott stated that this waiver would not supersede the original agreement. Palmer stated that if the waiver is signed, the City will be purchasing excess hours from MEAN, rather than an outside entity. Leef stated that Council already voted to opt out and that will not change. The City needs to figure out what opting out looks like and negotiate the terms within the limits that have already been set. Strommen asked for a motion. Bondegard moved, Buckner seconded, "That City staff be allowed to negotiate the waiver agreement with MEAN." Roll call: Yeas: Buckner, Bondegard, Strommen. Nays: None. Absent: Sherman, Radcliffe. Motion approved.

Scott introduced Tom Mathine as the new Electric Superintendent. Mathine gave a brief history about himself. Scott stated the Forrest project is moving along nicely. The Aquatic Center parking lot is done and the trails are still being connected. There is a groundbreaking for the Solar project on June 18. Scott thanked the Parks Department for the work done on the Cemetery for the Memorial weekend.

There was no action taken on the Fund Raiser for Keep Sidney Beautiful.

Borchert stated that the Farmer Market has 14 vendors currently signed up. The Farmers Market will begin the last Saturday of June.

Leef stated that she will be retiring in July, but still be with the City until the end of the year.

Amanda Eastin, Library Director, said the Summer Reading Program has begun.

Kegan Karwin, Finance Director, stated there were 17 views.

Kasey Kantor reported that he had 181 bus riders.

Paige Kantor stated people were lined up to receive the gift bags for the Girl's Day Out.

Barb Perez stated that the Transportation Department is working with the Veteran's, providing free rides.

Bondegard gave his congratulations to the Sidney Track Team.

Buckner stated he loves to hear about the growth of Sidney and that it is a desired place to do business.

Strommen said Sidney is a great place to live with fantastic things happening. Strommen thanked everyone for making it happen.

Meeting adjourned at 6:07 pm.

ATTEST: /s/PAUL STROMMEN, VICE MAYOR

ATTEST: /s/LORI BORCHERT, CITY CLERK