



## CITY OF FREEPORT

125 Main Street E – PO Box 301 – Freeport, MN 56331 – 320-836-2112 – FAX 320-836-2116  
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### January 26, 2016 – Meeting Minutes

A special meeting of the Freeport City Council was convened at 7:00pm by Mayor Rodney Atkinson with Councilmembers Mike Eveslage, Ken Goebel, Tim Hennen, and Ben Eittle present.

Staff in attendance: Clerk-Treasurer Adrianna Hennen, City Attorney Scott Dymoke, City Engineer Dave Blommel, and Maintenance Assistant Vernon Fuchs.

#### Residents in attendance:

Dave Walz (Stearns County)  
Andrea Ramacher (720 1<sup>st</sup> Ave N)  
Craig Timp (213 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW)  
Gail Osendorf (124 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE)  
Bud & Anne Heidgerken (316 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave NE)  
MaryAnn Laing (203 9<sup>th</sup> St SE)

Dave Humbert (104 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave NE)  
Dennis Heidgerken (116 2<sup>nd</sup> St NE)  
John Gilk (108 9<sup>th</sup> St SE)  
Bryan Scherping (135 Main St E)  
Matt Worms (124 9<sup>th</sup> St SE)

#### Approve Agenda

A. Hennen stated that SunShare no longer had room for Freeport in their Coldspring so they would not be attending the meeting. T. Hennen moved to approve the agenda removing SunShare, seconded by K. Goebel. Motion carried 5-0.

#### Public Hearing – Public Comment on Mail Ballot Voting

Mayor Atkinson opened the public hearing at 7:05pm.

Dave Walz, Stearns Co. elections director, stated that this is the first time Stearns Co. is offering mail ballot voting. Stearns Co. isn't promoting it, but instead is only giving the options to smaller precincts. Walz explained that the county mails out the ballots between 20-40 days before the election to every registered voter and the voter then mails back the ballot. This will occur for both the primary and general election and there will be no polling place on Election Day.

Matt Worms asked how you register if you're not registered. Walz said you can register online 20 days before the election, you can register at City Hall, and the County can mail you information. Walz said the people who want to register on election day, this will make it more inconvenient. It was pointed out that Freeport has a high number of people who register on election day. Walz said you can still vote by absentee. Walz also stated that Stearns County will hold a polling place on election day, but it will be down at the county offices.

K. Goebel asked if the City would still be able to hold a primary. Walz stated that mail ballot voting would take the place of the of primary election as well. Walz explained the County would do an initial mailing 45

days before the election, then after the 20 day cutoff for registration, the County will send out another mailing to the people who registered after the first mailing.

Gail Osendorf asked the cost of each ballot for the whole process per voter. Walz stated it was \$6.50. A. Hennen stated that it was essentially the same cost to do mail voting as the cost of running a polling place. Mayor Atkinson stated that the cost is insignificant since we either pay it in city taxes or county taxes.

Walz said if they receive a spoiled ballot while running them, they will not be counted. K. Goebel said that they get a chance to fix it if they fill it out incorrectly, here.

Bud Heidgerken stated that he understood this was a good system for townships and really small precincts, that it could save them money and time.

B. Heidgerken asked why Walz was hesitant to introduce this to Freeport. Walz said because Freeport is right on that breakeven point in terms of cost. The thing that might put Freeport over the edge is the inevitable cost of new machines that will be happening in 2018 and it doesn't look like there will be state dollars like there was last time.

B. Heidgerken asked what happens if ballots are late. Walz said they have to be in by the time they count them on election day. That's why they mail them out 45 days ahead of time.

B. Heidgerken said there can be a lot of problems with putting your PO Box versus your street address on their ballot information. B. Heidgerken also asked what happens if you find a mistake on the ballot. Walz said there is information that you have to fill out on the envelop, if that information is incorrect the County will mail it back and give you the chance to fix it. If it's getting close to the Election Day the County will call you to notify you the outside envelop information is incorrect. If the information on the ballot is incorrect while they are running the ballot, Walz stated it is then a spoiled ballot and cannot be counted.

B. Heidgerken also commented that mail voting is relying heavily on the postal system, which isn't very reliable.

B. Heidgerken stated that Freeport's voting machine will and should last a lot longer than, say, St. Cloud's voting machine since we don't run as many ballots. Walz agreed, but said that they not have multiple machines in use. Once they switch machines every polling place will be required to have the same, new, machine.

Walz stated that now that they changed the reasons for absentee ballot voting, that many more people are utilizing that, so when people say the postal system isn't reliable, a lot of people are relying on it.

K. Goebel stated that he is a veteran and he feels some of the privilege that he, and some other audience members, fought for are being taken away. He strongly stated that he thinks something that they fought for is being taken away and let some jokers in St. Cloud vote are ballots when we could do it here.

Walz stated that it's Freeport's decision, if Freeport doesn't want to do it, then don't do it.

K. Goebel said the people doing this have never stepped foot on an army base or in a recruiting office.

Mayor Atkinson stated that he never thought the intent was to ever take anything away from anyone. Atkinson stated he thinks the intent was to increase the voter participation. Atkinson also stated that Freeport's turnout is so high already he didn't know how much more it would actually increase. Atkinson stated that you can get an absentee ballot and you can come to the polling place.

B. Heidgerken stated that he had a number of names on a petition he passed around of people who don't want this to change and it's very undemocratic to impede someone's right to vote. B. Heidgerken stated Freeport's turnout is so high already he doesn't know what change this will really have. He also stated that some places have seen voter turnout decrease.

Eveslage stated that Washington and Oregon have the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> highest turnout and they have mail voting and both of those were significant increases.

Walz stated to keep in mind those are entire state stats, not precinct by precinct.

Matt Worms think people feel good about themselves being able to vote in person and seems more serious then voting at your kitchen table.

Osendorf asked how we know our ballot made it to the County. Walz said they put it online, like they do with absentee, stating it was accepted.

Osendorf also said that the election judges make it more personal in Freeport and are able to vouge for people.

Mayor Atkinson and Dave Humbert also stated that sometimes you don't realize you have to register, you think you are and sometimes you are not. You might have moved or not voted in the last four years and that means you have to reregister.

B. Heidgerken stated an item on the voting bill of rights is that you have to the right to vote in a polling place without the influence of anyone else. Voting by mail would take that right away if a spouse or someone else is there while you're voting.

B. Heidgerken also presented the council with the petition he had citizens sign.

Eveslage wanted to make it clear that if Freeport were to approve mail ballot voting, Freeport would not be taking away any voting rights, instead it would be changing the way you would vote.

T. Hennen agreed, since that seemed to be a large misconception in town. T. Hennen also stated he was disappointed in the amount of criticism upon the postal service and that if people had a business in retail you would rely heavily on the postal system.

Mayor Atkinson closed the public hearing at 8:02pm

### **Consent Agenda**

K. Goebel moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Ettle. Motion carried 5-0.

### **Reports**

#### Fire Department

Chief Gilk asked if he could have approval to purchase three new pagers for the department for the cost of about \$480 per pager and for three new battery pagers for the cost of \$21 per pager. K. Goebel moved, seconded by Ertle to purchase three pagers and three pager batteries. Motion carried 5-0.

Chief Gilk also recommended lowering the Chief salary from \$2,880 to \$1,500 per year. K. Goebel moved to lower the salary for the Chief to \$1,500, seconded by Ertle. Motion carried 5-0.

#### Public Works Report

No comments

#### Engineering Report

Dave Blommel explained that they agreement won't change how the City and SEH are operating, it's just putting it in writing. Eveslage moved to accept the agreement, seconded by Ertle. Motion carried 5-0.

#### **Old Business**

##### Mail Ballot Voting

Mayor Atkinson made a motion to accept the petition put together by Bud Heidgerken, seconded by K. Goebel. Motion carried 5-0.

K. Goebel moved to keep Freeport as a polling place, seconded by Ertle. Mayor Atkinson asked for a rollcall vote. Atkinson-yes; Ertle-yes; Eveslage-yes; K. Goebel; T. Hennen-yes. Motion carried 5-0.

#### **New Business**

##### Resolution 2016-01 Appointing Freeport State Bank as Official Depository

K. Goebel moved to approve Resolution 2016-01, seconded by T. Hennen. Motion carried 5-0.

##### Resolution 2016-02 Appointing Central Minnesota Credit Union as Official Depository

Ertle moved to approve Resolution 2016-02, seconded by Eveslage. Motion carried 5-0.

##### Resolution 2016-03 2015 Donations

K. Goebel moved to accept Resolution 2016-03, seconded by Eveslage. Motion carried 5-0.

##### 2016 Appointments

K. Goebel moved to appoint the same people that were appointed in 2015. Mayor Atkinson moved to amend K. Goebel motion to remove the League of MN Cities from Depositors; to re-evaluate Park & Recreation Commissioners; to re-evaluate Well-Head Protection Committee; to include Sauk Centre Herald as Official Newspaper. Atkinsons motion was seconded by Eveslage. Motion carried 5-0. Ertle then seconded K. Goebel's initial motion to approve the appointments, which now included the amendments. Motion carried 5-0.

##### Seal Coating

K. Goebel moved to approve the seal coating of the shoulder on County Road 11, seconded by T. Hennen. Motion carried 5-0.

##### Tri-County Humane Society 2016 Agreement

Ertle moved to approve the agreement between the City and Tri-County Humane Society, seconded by T. Hennen. Motion carried 5-0.

**Adjourn**

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Mayor, Rodney Atkinson

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City Clerk-Treasurer, Adrianna Hennen