The Ellsworth City Council met in regular session at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall on November 13th, 2023 with Mayor Yager presiding and the following council present: Gelder, Funk, Norem and King. Absent: Sogard.

 October Receipts October Disbursements

General Fund 125276.03 26364.83

Road Use Fund 5703.35 1270.29

Employee Benefit Fund 9427.61 2889.05

Emergency Fund 3505.61

Local Option Sales Tax Fund 5054.70

Tax Increment Finance Area 1 9678.09

Tax Increment Finance 1 Amend 9340.25

Bingo Fund 5439.34 15838.34

Debt Service Fund 5660.09

Capital Project-Strm Water

Capital Project-Water Tower

Water Fund 27731.75 13866.41

Water Sinking Fund

Sewer Fund 8633.67 6170.42

Electric Fund 69074.53 56829.53

Electric Sinking Fund

Storm Water Fund 5034.54 56.70

Storm Water Sinking 5473.00

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 $289559.56 $128758.57

**AGENDA APPROVAL**: Motion by King, seconded by Gelder to approve the agenda. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried.

**CONSENT AGENDA**: Motion by Norem, seconded by King to approve the following items listed on the consent agenda:

1. Motion to approve October 9th, 2023 council minutes.
2. Motion to approve October payment of claims.
3. Motion to approve FY22/23 Urban Renewal Report.
4. Motion to approve debt payment for December 1st, 2023 SRF Loan Interest Only Payment in the amount of $12,381.25.

Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried and claims hereby made a portion of these minutes.

**PUBLIC FORUM:** None

**FOWL PERMIT PROCEDURES:** The council discussed the numerous residents who have yet to complete their annual fowl permit renewals which were due on October 1st, 2023. The permit states that each permit must be renewed by October 1st of each year and that after October 5th of each year, a $2 late fee for every month will be assessed. The permit also states that failure to comply may result in revocation of the permit. The council determined that the Clerk will issue one last reminder letter to non-compliant owners which will be hand delivered, before the opportunity to have the fowl is revoked.

**BUILDING PERMIT CHANGES**: The council had previously discussed building permit procedures and the cost of obtaining a permit. The cost of a permit has been set at $10 for many years and the permit process has been relatively loosely followed. Due to continued issues, The Clerk and Council have determined there will be minor changes in the policy and

effective January 1st, 2023, a new permit fee will apply and the permitting steps will be reinforced. Motion by Gelder, seconded by King to change the fee to $50 for any permitted project required up to the valuation of $10,000 and $150 for permitted projects above the $10,001 valuation. All permits must be approved and signed BEFORE any work can be started, or a fine and/or removal of the project may occur. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried.

**DECEMBER DEPARMENT MEETINGS:** The council had spoken last month about a year end department meeting and new budget procedures heading into the FY24/25 fiscal year. The City Clerk will be attending mandatory training offered by the Department of Management and Iowa League of Cities in November and have more information available about the impact the new HF718 bill will have on general levy ability and property tax valuation growth at the meeting. It was suggested that in addition to department heads; any board members, officers or supporting personnel also be invited to attend the December meeting. The City Clerk will send out a reminder to each department to ensure the attendance of everyone.

**SPECIAL MEETING FOR ANNUAL FINANCE REPORT:** Motion by King, seconded by Funk to set Tuesday November 28th, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. for a special meeting to approve the FY23 Annual Financial Report. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried.

**WATER TOWER UPDATES:** It was determined by the DNR that a Phase I Archaeological review would need to be completed on the proposed water tower site. The DNR has also requested due to the age of the existing tower, a cultural/historical review be completed as part of the project. Bolten and Menk, Inc. obtained several quotes to perform said services for the City, as they are necessary to move forward with construction. Motion by King, seconded by Funk to approve the proposal from In Situ Archaeological Consulting, LLC. in the amount of $10,138.00. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried.

**BINGO HOLIDAY GIFT CARDS:** Motion by Gelder, seconded by Funk to approve 25- $10 Holiday gift cards for Thanksgiving and 25- $10 Holiday gift cards for Christmas to be given as Bingo prizes. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried.

**BUDGET/LEVY CHANGES:** Due to House File 718 that was approved by the Iowa Legislature, City budgets throughout Iowa will be impacted in the coming years as a new Combined General Fund Levy is implemented. The new Levy eliminates a host of general fund levies that were previously available to City governments, and potentially restricts or decreases a City’s general fund levy for Cities that experience certain levels of property valuation growth. The City Clerk will be attending formal training in November on some of these changes and what it means to the budgeting timeline and future revenues for the FY2025 budget and beyond.

**INVOICES:** Last month there were several invoices that were in question, awaiting additional information from Supervisor Vanlangen. After discussing in length certain invoicing procedures and homeowner/businessowner responsibilities, it was determined that moving forward additional communication would take place prior to contractors being called out or work being performed. Both Vanlangen and the City Clerk will reach out to responsible parties to resolve the remaining open tickets per council’s request. The Clerk also presented council with an invoice for $18, 212.50 from Hill’s Backhoe and Tiling for completing work on replacing 2 fire hydrants in town. Supervisor Vanlangen explained that the hydrant along Hwy 175 required additional equipment, man power and experience than he and Public Works employee Knickerbocker could provide due to the proximity to the highway, numerous underground cables and lines and the complexity of the repair and replacement. There was a motion by Norem, seconded by King to approve payment to Hill’s Backhoe and Tiling in the amount of $18,212.50. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried.

**PO SYSTEM:** In conjunction with budget changes, rising operating costs, increases in automatic invoicing and changes in payment processing, along with several internal factors, the Council and City Clerk have been working on ways to ensure the City’s future financial health. Both would like to be certain the City can support the continued need for potential

growth, while withstanding its current debt obligations, as well as being able to supplement any revenue decreases that may occur from levy changes, and still be able to meet the current needs and requirements of all departments within

the City. After several discussions on the best possible options to move forward, it was determined that implementing a Purchasing Order Policy would address several different factors and areas of concern for the future. The Clerk will compile suggestions and examples of other governing bodies that currently utilize the PO policy for the councils review at the December meeting.

**NEW CONSTRUCTION/NEW UTILITY PROCEDURES:** Recently there have been several new utility connections throughout the City, as well as buildings that took over new management or ownership. In the process of these changes, there was miscommunication and misunderstanding on the process of water and sewer connection permits and new utility sign ups. The usual process is started at City Hall with the proper paperwork, identification and permitting/deposit fees and proceeds to the Public Works Department from there. The Clerk expressed her frustration with trying to now work backwards to correct the missed steps of having the proper paperwork required for services to continue and to be billed to the customer, combined with the non-compliance she was receiving from them. It was agreed, that moving forward all new service, change of service, addition of service or removal of service would be initiated through City Hall only and once that process was completed, would then proceed to the next step.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mayor Yager adjourned the meeting at 9:43 pm.

