

**ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
January 16, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Ashland City Council was held at the Ashland City Hall Council Chambers on the 16th day of January, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor James Anderson
City Council President Chuck Niemeyer
City Council Member Michelle Libal
City Council Member Jerry Lofberg
City Council Member Jim Pinkman
City Administrator Jessica Quady
City Clerk Kristina Stoki
Assistant City Attorney Anthony Aerts

Others: Heather Kennedy, Caleb Fjone, Julie Ogden, Tim Rudd, Ron Styskal, William Styskal, Mark Trebilcock, Dan Linke, Carol Clough, Heather Logston, and others

Notice of the meeting was advertised in the Ashland Gazette on January 10, 2025. The Mayor and all Council Members received advance notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda as shown by the Acknowledgment of Receipt of Notice. All proceedings shown hereafter were taken while the convened meeting was open to the public.

Mayor Anderson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Roll Call was taken, and a quorum was declared. Anderson noted the Open Meetings Act located on the south wall of the room.

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Libal to adopt the regular agenda.
Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

Public Comment was given by Resident William Styskal wanted to know if the three-minute commentary time limit applied to the public hearing later in the meeting. Mayor Anderson stated "No" and Assistant Attorney Aerts supported such statement.

Mayor Anderson opened the Public Hearing on the Levy of Special Assessments for Street Improvement Project No. 2022-01 Dennis Dean Road from U.S. Hwy 6 to Fir Street at 7:03 p.m. Julie Ogden, the City of Ashland Street Superintendent from JEO Consulting Group, Inc, highlighted several items contained within the report provided, and noted minor changes. She noted total costs as stated in the final report. She discussed assessable costs, intersection costs, other categories of costs, costs not being assessed, etc. She noted the recommended per square foot

assessment value, and that the assessments would be collected over a period of 15 years if not paid within the first 50 days per the drafted resolution provided. City Administrator Quady stated bond rates are currently between 4.9-5% and interest is as listed in the drafted resolution provided. Ogden stated she is here to answer any questions after residents or others speak. Mayor Anderson invited people to speak after agreement given by Assistant City Attorney Aerts.

Resident William Styskal gave various commentary, which included the assessment of \$62K to his (one) property, past increases in property value due to other improvements in the area, confusion on how the current assessment was set, property value having to be proven as assessed, and how it will increase his property value by the assessed amount given limited usage of street and its limited visibility due to the embankment, wanting to understand the special benefits he will be receiving with this project, understands that the City and community benefit with a new shop, but that shouldn't be assessed to individual residents, not being aware that he would have to pay for the landscaping he chose, 8 inches of pavement being commercial grade vs. residential and this being something the City needs and not something the residents need, acknowledgement there will be some assessments he incurs for these kinds of projects, concerns about the cost of housing and how that will affect his retirement, losses incurred due to the wind break no longer existing (tree removal) from prior City work, storm damage including gazebo damage, roof damage, tree damage, loss of privacy, and additional noise. He stated he may look for some kind of additional relief depending on the outcome of the assessments, hopes that clean-scrape developments get banned, and that some people like the trees and rustic look. After Styskal's commentary concluded, Mayor Anderson stated appreciation for his commentary.

Resident Heather Logston gave various commentary, which included her hearing talk of these assessments and commercial grading, inquiring about what the City is doing with the shop, inquiring about her property becoming commercial based on the paving done, feeling like we are in a land grab situation because of development opportunities, worry about loss of privacy, splitting up of land for lots, getting pushed out, hearing a lot of rumors and sees development, wanting to know what to expect and what is happening. She stated she purchased her historic home on purpose, has done a lot of upgrades, has put in a lot of care to make the property nicer from its previous derelict condition. Mayor Anderson and City Administrator Quady responded that nothing was planned for her area except for the potential City shop, which is still being looked into from a funding standpoint. Niemeyer stated that it is private people wanting to develop, not the City, and that the selling of land is in control of the current owner. Logston stated the Council seems preferential to what happens, and Niemeyer stated the City cannot guarantee anything and has no control over private entities. Logston stated they were to get City sewer thorough all of these improvements but that hasn't yet happened. She also stated that they don't have sidewalks on the East side and stated it seems this side has been ignored until a development opportunity was spotted and now this is being done at the cost of the residents. Niemeier stated there is phenomenal topography on the east side. Logston questioned the beautification of the City with developments like a City shop on the main highway that people see when coming into town, and a better location for City utilities. Niemeyer reminded people the area was a "dump" several years ago. Logston

stated how we are known for our beautiful City and our parks. After Logston's commentary concluded, Mayor Anderson stated appreciation for her commentary.

Julie Ogden responded to commentary from both Styskal and Logston. She noted that landscaping was not assessed. She stated what was assessed and provided specific figures and references. She mentioned this assessment project is one of the higher ones she has seen. Resident William Styskal mentioned from his research that the property has to demonstrate the increase in value. She mentioned that a special benefit has to be shown but that a 1 to 1 value does not have to be demonstrated. She mentioned corner lots get hit harder because they have to pay for both streets. She mentioned that via a resolution, the council can make a recommendation that the assessments be reduced but cautioned that this type of action may set a precedence. Councilman Pinkman mentioned the point made by Styskal about the City putting in the shop there was good, and if the shop is strictly for City use, that should be looked [as part of the overall assessment]. Ogden mentioned paving was evaluated before the location was identified for the City Shop. City Administrator Quady and Ogden mentioned trying to get grants for it for several years to pave all of the gravel streets in that area and the benefits for the City to pave this due to reduced maintenance. Ogden mentioned standard 8-inch concrete per geotechnical report based on soils in area but clarified that 7-inch (typical for residential) vs 8-inch concrete thickness cost difference could be included to reduce the assessment in justifiable ways without setting a precedent in reducing an assessment. William Styskal mentioned he isn't saying he doesn't want to pay anything, but that the current assessment on his property is too much. Ogden agrees the assessments are huge, because of the economy and COVID, and the hilly area making it harder to build. Ogden asked if she captured William Styskal's concerns, and he stated "yes". Mayor Anderson asked for additional commentary from Assistant City Attorney Aerts, who had no additional comments, other than amending the resolution as a possibility. William Styskal mentioned he mows and weeds the corner and needs new mulch. He mentioned he is fine with things but wants some relief if possible. Niemeyer and Pinkman gave personal experiences they had with their own properties relating to the July Storm, and acknowledging William Styskal's concerns. William Styskal invited us to try and remember the location with and without the trees when we next drive there. Pinkman stated he had done this and did notice the difference.

With no further comment, Mayor Anderson closed the public hearing at 7:34 p.m.

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Lofberg to approve Resolution 2025-1 Setting Mileage Rate for Reimbursement.

City Administrator Quady stated that this is being updated to align with federal mileage increase to \$0.70 per mile.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Lofberg to table Resolution 2025-2 Levy of Special Assessment for Street Improvement Project No. 2022-1 Dennis Dean Road from U.S. Hwy 6 to Fir Street to the February 6th City Council Meeting, and that a Public Hearing will not be held at that meeting.

It was discussed that feedback on the calculations will be given to Ogden, and that the project needs to be looked at in more detail. Lofberg, Pinkman, and Niemeyer stated agreement in that, and that the additional points made should be considered. William Styskal stated appreciation. Points made at the public hearing earlier in this meeting will be looked at and reviewed. Concrete and other items will be reviewed further with Ogden, and City Administrator Quady can get William Styskal additional information ahead of the next meeting but that the public hearing is over and another one will not be held. Niemeier stated the project still needs to be paid for. The Council will look at how to do this ahead of time and at the next meeting.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Pinkman to approve generator (G1b) portion of Scope Changes for Ashland Water Supply Improvements.

City Administrator Quady clarified that G1a is the wellhouse, and G1c is the wellhouse and the generator. Councilman Pinkman commented that per his meeting with Lincoln Water System, we are not in need of a well house. Niemeyer stated there is a new well going in at 29th & Boyd. Quady confirmed this. Quady clarified the chlorination and fluoridation site at 24th & Clay. Quady will notify the contractor that no well-house is needed.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

Mayor Anderson said the administrative reports for December 2024 are available for council review and comment. Reports included the Keno, Public Works Director's, Utility Superintendent's, Police Chief's, Building Official's, Library Director's, AAEDC Director's, and Rescue Director's. Councilman Lofberg requested a Rescue Update of part-time positions. City Administrator Quady stated they have started offering positions and are getting started with physical capacity and drug screen tests. Councilwoman Libal read through the numbers provided in the packet report (21 candidates: 8 paramedics, 1 AEMT, 12 EMT's; 3 local candidates: 2 EMT's and 1 Paramedic) The specific hiring numbers are in the packet and it will take a couple weeks to get them through testing.

Motion by Lofberg, second by Libal to approve consent agenda which included approval of the January 2, 2025 City Council meeting minutes; and approval of the December 2024 Treasurers Report.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Pinkman to approve the first half of January 2025 Claims.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

Mayors Report given. He stated that there were \$930K in building permits issued last year including 3 new homes (2 in Whitetail, 1 in Iron Horse). Commentary made by Niemeyer and Anderson that the high school shop class is doing a foundation project on Dawes Street for one of the new homes, and that a three-plex is going in at 22nd and Silver.

Communications given: Caleb Fjone mentioned the 9 a.m. Coffee & Conversation function happening on January 24th and also that Ashland is hosting an area Economic Development meeting for sixteen other Economic Development Directors in the area, on Friday January 24th.

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Lofberg to enter into Executive Session for contract negotiations at 7:49 p.m.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

The public was dismissed, and it was stated they would be notified when the regular meeting resumes.


Motion by Niemeyer, second by Libal to leave Executive Session at 8:05 p.m.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

The public was notified of the adjournment of Executive Session.

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Libal to adjourn from Regular Session at 8:06 p.m.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried


James Anderson, Mayor


Kristina Stoki, City Clerk



I, the above signed City Clerk of Ashland, Saunders County, Nebraska hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate copy of the proceedings had and done by the Council on January 16, 2025 that all of the subjects included in the foregoing proceedings were contained in the agenda for the meeting, kept continually current and readily available for public inspection at the office of the City Clerk; that such subjects were contained in said agenda for at least twenty four hours prior to said meeting; that said minutes from which the foregoing proceedings have been extracted were in written form and available for public inspection within ten business days or prior to the next convened meeting of said body.