The Ellsworth City Council met in regular session at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall on February 12th, 2024 with Mayor Yager presiding, and the following council present: King, Sogard and Laube. Absent: Funk and Gelder.

 January Receipts January Disbursements

General Fund 20320.40 15708.10

Road Use Fund 5946.95 1537.91

Employee Benefit Fund 34.34 771.52

Emergency Fund 12.78

Local Option Sales Tax Fund 4466.43

Tax Increment Finance Area 1

Tax Increment Finance 1 Amend 50.19

Bingo Fund 5430.67 3670.08

Debt Service Fund 20.33 13764.00

Capital Project-Strm Water

Capital Project-Water Tower

Water Fund 24171.75 8712.53

Water Sinking Fund

Sewer Fund 7036.07 6630.88

Electric Fund 83113.12 55281.88

Electric Sinking Fund 175.54

Storm Water Fund 3780.75 56.70

Storm Water Sinking 3058.00

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**AGENDA APPROVAL**: Motion by King, seconded by Sogard to approve the agenda. Roll call votes 3-0. Motion carried.

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

1. Motion to approve January 8th, and January 30th, 2024 council minutes.
2. Motion to approve January payment of claims.

Roll call votes 3-0. Motion carried and claims hereby made a portion of these minutes.

**PUBLIC FORUM:** None

**SOUTH HAMILTON YOUTH BASEBALL REQUEST:** Jeremy Sloan was in attendance to speak with the council about the 2024 youth baseball season. He explained the sign-up fees and how that was distributed to different costs, as well as providing a chart of operating expenses. The league is looking to start practice in late March/early April with games wrapping up at the end of June. They have requested use of the Ellsworth field, to allow banners to be hung on the fence and a donation from the City. Motion by Sogard, seconded by Laube to authorize use of the field and approve the donation banners. Roll call votes 3-0. Motion carried.

**YSS REQUEST:** Keith Holland with Youth and Shelter Services of Hamilton County was present to discuss services they provide in our area. He also updated the council on the new Youth Recovery facility being built in Cambridge Iowa and

the treatment and support it will offer youth throughout Iowa. Motion by Sogard, seconded by Laube to approve the $1,000.00 budget request for the FY24/25 budget year. Roll call votes 3-0. Motion carried.

The Clerk also received a request from Upper Des Moines Opportunity for continued support in the amount of $300.00. UDMO provides assistance in Ellsworth to individuals and households who struggle with heating and electrical

obligations. Motion by King, seconded by Sogard to approve the $300.00 budget request for the FY24/25 budget year. Roll call votes 3-0. Motion carried.

**ELLSWORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATON:** Linda Clark addressed the council as a representative for the ECA in regards to using the Community Center lunchroom to hold their monthly meeting. Previously, the association had met in the back meeting room of the Library building, but due to a recent fee being implemented, have requested to utilize the lunchroom instead. She expressed the different functions the ECA performs throughout the City and the number of community events they host or co-host during the year, including the Easter Egg hunt, Ellsworth Extravaganza, Meet Santa Event, Christmas Lighting contest, Trick or Treat Night, an Motion by Sogard, seconded by King to allow the Ellsworth Community Association use of the Community Center lunchroom for their monthly meeting without fee. Roll call votes 3-0. Motion carried.

**1814 DAYTON:** Resident Dan Knippel was present to discuss a recent abatement notice he received from the local police department regarding items he had placed in his yard for a short period of time. He requested clarification of the timeline and type of storage he was able to have, what the actual procedure was and the correct steps in how to obtain permission or an extension if he was working on a project, to allow for those type of items to not create a nuisance. Officers and Council, along with the City Clerk discussed with the resident different options and procedures to help create a positive and cohesive solution moving forward.

**BUDGET DISCUSSION:**

1. **LIBRARY**- Former Library Director Schmitz and Library Board Members Neuman and Lovell were in attendance to discuss the Library’s budget request for the FY24/25 budget year, as well as provide an update on Library matters. The Library requested $41,483.00 for the upcoming budget year expenses. Motion by King, seconded by Laube to approve the Library’s FY24/25 budget. Roll call votes 3-0. Motion carried.

Council members also inquired about how the hiring process of a new director was progressing and where the job position was being posted. At this time, the Library is open to the public on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm.

1. **FIRE-** Chief Evans was present to submit the Fire Departments FY24/25 budget request. The Department is requesting $48,746.00 for budget expenses this year. Chief Evans again discussed repairs needed at the fire station such as the roof and gutters. The council is still awaiting quotes for gutter replacement from the June meeting. Evans also discussed the new turn out gear that had been purchased and the implementation and cost of the new digital pager system. Due to Councilmember Sogard being on the department and the absence of several other councilmembers, no vote was taken at this time.
2. **EMS-** Chief Evans also presented the council with the FY24/25 EMS budget request. The Department is requesting $17,100.00 for budget expenses this year. Evans discussed with the council that since the EMS department is self-funded, and many of the calls they respond to, they do not receive payment for, if there was additional revenue available from the City. Previously, the City allocated $15,000 from the Local Option Sales Tax fund to help purchase an auto load cot for the ambulance and $10,000 to the Fire Department for new turn out gear, gutters, and repairs to fire equipment. In response, the Clerk offered the option of using the additional annual tax allocation of twenty- and one-fourth cents per thousand dollars of assessed taxable property valuations that is given to the fire department when not required, to be given to the EMS department instead. The Fire Department would continue to receive the allocated forty- and one-half cents per thousand from the City, plus the additional $30,000.00 of revenue from the Townships for fire protection. Due to Councilmember Sogard being on the department and the absence of several other councilmembers, no vote was taken at this time.

The Clerk received several past due Fire and EMS statements that the City never received invoices for and advised the council that after reaching out to department heads and not getting a response, she was unable to complete the required paperwork or pay the balances. Chief Evans will look into obtaining the needed information.

1. **BINGO-** The Clerk state that the FY24/25 budget for Bingo would remain much the same, however an increase in operating expenses was to be expected due to inflation prices and the economy. She also accounted for repairs to the gym and roof from the dedicated expenses line due to requirements set by the state of Iowa in completing the annual Bingo Report.
2. **PUBLIC WORKS-** Supervisor Vanlangen was available to discuss items needed for the different departments throughout the City. He expressed the need for a new air compressor for the water treatment plant, a new line locator and new manhole assemblies. The Clerk has been working on a Capital Improvement Plan to aid in future needs throughout the City and will have a better idea of what revenues are available once budgets are approved and the Water Tower Project gets underway.
3. **YEARLY ALLOCATIONS:** The council discussed several yearly allocations to various organizations that will be affected due to change in budget levies and revenues. There was conversation regarding the State Auditor’s advisory on public funds going to private non-profits and what that will mean for donations the City has given in the past.
4. **OTHER-** The Clerk presented the finalized 28E agreement with The Hamilton County Sherrif Department to the council. With the increase in per capita rate, Ellsworth’s fiscal responsibility increases from $7,112.00 per year to $10,160.00. There were concerns expressed regarding the additional expense and where that revenue would come from since the Emergency levy previously used to cover the expense has now been combined into the general level, as well as if the increase would result in more patrolling in our City. It was agreed to wait for a full council to vote.

**COUNCIIL MEETING CHANGES:** No action was taken at this time due to several members of the council being absent.

**SNOW PLOW REPAIR:** The rear differential repair was completed on the 2007 snow plow by Grain State Repair on 2/2/24. The repair came in under the original quote thanks to Supervisor Vanlangen already removing the old unit. Final cost for the repair, including a 3-year warranty was $6130.53.

**NEW ONLINE UTILITY BILL PAYMENT SYSTEM:** After doing more research on the best option for both the City and residents, the Clerk was able to present a new option for utility bill payment that allow residents to have their bill automatically taken out of their account, show their payment history, include their current and past due balances and give them the ability to eventually have their bill emailed instead of mailed. There will be a cost to the City annually of $119.40 from Nuvei and $195.00 per year from the software company Banyon. The fee to residents will be the same 2.75% fee for credit/debit card transactions and a $1.10 fee for ACH/EFT transactions. Motion by Sogard, seconded by King to approve contract with Nuvei for online bill payment. Roll call votes 3-0. Motion carried.

**OUTSTANDING INVOICES:** The Clerk discussed invoices from Van Wert Inc. that needed clarification before being paid and that in working with Supervisor Vanlangen, they had established the appropriate payment. Both employees will speak with Van Wert Inc. to finalize the meter project and make final payment.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mayor Yager adjourned the meeting at 9:27 pm.

/s/ Dolorus Yager, Mayor

/s/ Amy L. Zeman, City Clerk