**WADENA COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

**PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES**

**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 4, 2023**

**1:00 p.m.**

**VERNDALE FIRE HALL**

**102 BUTLER ST SE**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ardith Carr, Daryl Jacobson,Tara Erckenbrack

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**  Brad Cottrell, Jim Runyan

**STAFF PRESENT:** Melissa Current, City Clerk/Treasurer; Matt Uselman, Public Works Manager

**VISITORS PRESENT:** Renae Jacobson, Mark Callahan, Jeannie Mayer, Lois Gould, Roger Anderson, Raye Ludovissie, Rachel Johnson

The purpose of this public hearing is to inform the public on the condition of the Police Department as is, the options that are available to the community and discussion on what is best for Verndale now and into the future.

Mayor Erckenbrack opened the public hearing at 1:00 pm.

Erckenbrack stated that the Chief of Police has submitted his resignation effective Feb. 8, 2023. Erckenbrack stated that the Council is seeking community input on what is wanted/needed for service. Erckenbrack stated that there are three main discussion points:

1. Dissolve the Police Department (do nothing): Equipment would need to be sold.
2. Keep the Department and realign with the communities wants/needs
3. Contract with the County: Possibly not as good as coverage for enforcement of City Ordinances

R. Jacobson asked if the school would get any benefits with contracting with the County. Erckenbrack stated that if the City does nothing or contracts with the County then the School would be out (no officer). Erckenbrack stated that even with keeping the department the contract with the school would need to be realigned. Callahan asked if anybody has applied for the officer position. Erckenbrack stated that the Chief position hasn’t been posted yet; there is an applicant that is brand new that has applied for the Full Time Police Officer position that has been posted for the last six months. Erckenbrack stated that there is a Part-Time Officer that has stated that they would love to come back and work here Part Time. Carr stated that it was her understanding that the City can’t have a full time officer without a Chief. Erckenbrack stated that there can’t be any officers without a Chief. Erckenbrack stated that there is an option called CLEO, which is a supervisory position over the officers while the City tries to find a Chief. Erckenbrack stated that there are three options for CLEO at the moment. Anderson stated that 20-25 years ago they went through this and the individual insurance policies for the Fire Department without a Police Department would jump up because there wouldn’t be anyone on fire watch. Erckenbrack stated that the City would check with the Fire Chief to find out if that has changed. Mayer asked if having a Part-Time Chief was an option. Erckenbrack stated that she wasn’t sure that the City would be able to hire a Part-Time Chief. There was discussion about the qualifications and requirements of the Chief position. Erckenbrack asked for those

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present to vote for which option they would like to pursue so that the conversation could be tunneled. Those present voted for keeping the Police Department and realigning with the communities wants/needs. There was discussion about the expectations of the Police Department.

Mayor Erckenbrack closed the meeting at 1:26 pm.

**Submitted by: Attest:**

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Melissa Current, City Clerk/Treasurer Tara Erckenbrack, Mayor