

**CITY OF CEDARBURG
COMMON COUNCIL
August 17, 2020**

**CC20200817-1
UNAPPROVED**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Cedarburg, Wisconsin, was held online on Monday, August 17, 2020, utilizing the Zoom app.

Mayor O'Keefe called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Present - Mayor Michael O'Keefe, Council Members Jack Arnett, Kristin Burkart, Rick Verhaalen, Robert Simpson, Patricia Thome, Barbara Lythjohan

Excused - Council Member Sherry Bublitz

Also Present - City Administrator Mikko Hilvo, City Attorney Michael Herbrand, Deputy City Clerk Amy Kletzien, City Assessor Cathy Timm, interested citizens and news media

STATEMENT OF PUBLIC NOTICE

At Mayor O'Keefe's request, Deputy City Clerk Kletzien verified that notice of this meeting was provided to the public by forwarding the agenda to the City's official newspaper, the *News Graphic*, to all news media and citizens who requested copies, and by posting in accordance with the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law. Citizens present were welcomed and encouraged to provide their input during the citizen comment portion of the meeting.

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM CITIZENS- None

NEW BUSINESS

CONSIDER CITY ASSESSOR SERVICES; AND ACTION THEREON

Mayor O'Keefe explained that City Assessor Timm is retiring this fall and he thanked her for her many years of service to the City.

City Administrator Hilvo explained that he is presenting the Common Council with three options for assessor services:

- Option A – Hire a new full-time City Assessor for residential assessments and continue with a contractor for commercial assessments. Most costly option but would provide customer service for citizens and staff.
- Option B – Hire an experienced residential and commercial assessor. This option would save the City approximately \$13,500.
- Option C – Use a contract service. This option would save the City approximately \$40,000.

City Administrator Hilvo explained that most surrounding communities contract this service. The Village of Grafton has an Assessor Technician to supplement the contracted assessor. The City of Mequon has a full-time secretary that supplements the contracted assessor.

City Administrator Hilvo explained that the upcoming revaluations will cost more than if done in-house. It will cost the City approximately \$78,000 for a partial revaluation in 2022 and \$120,000 - \$200,000 for a full revaluation in 2027. He is leaning towards hiring a contracted service at this time but is concerned about the loss in customer service. Early estimates for a contract service is \$85,000 for a one-year contract or \$85,000/year for a three-year contract.

City Assessor Timm stated that she would prefer to keep the service in-house, as it has been done on a full-time basis since 1996. Cedarburg provides good customer service and the community is used to this. In addition to her assessor duties she is responsible for completing special assessment letters that are required for residential closings (27 letters were completed last week); property owner lists and labels for public hearing notices; office walk-ins; and helping other departments in emergency situations. The City's current property value is \$1.5 billion.

In answer to Council Member Thome's question, City Administrator Hilvo explained that the City would not save much money if someone was hired to do administrative work. He said that special assessment letters could probably be done by the Engineering & Planning Secretary or the Building Inspection & Public Works Secretary, and the labels for public hearings could be done by the Clerk's office.

In answer to Council Member Arnett's question, City Administrator Hilvo estimated that placing a full-time resident Assessor could be done by November 1.

Council Member Thome expressed interest in hiring a contracted assessor for one year to explore all options.

City Assessor Timm explained that a revaluation is coming up and could possibly be stretched out one additional year.

Council Member Arnett confirmed that the City is doing okay with assessments and possibly the City could wait until the State requires a full revaluation.

Assessor Timm stated that 2020 is the first year that the City is out of compliance so the latest year for a revaluation would be 2023.

Council Member Burkart stated that as a real estate broker, it is valuable to have an Assessor on staff because real estate moves so quickly. It would be helpful to have an assessor on staff who knows Cedarburg.

In answer to Mayor O'Keefe's question, City Administrator Hilvo explained that contract assessors typically have a direct contact number on their website with a 24-hour response time.

Council Member Arnett confirmed with Assessor Timm that more data is available online for a person to find basic information. Assessor Timm stated that an added fee may be charged by a contract assessor to get more detail.

In answer to Council Member Thome's question, City Administrator Hilvo stated that only larger communities have an in-house Assessor's office such as West Bend, West Allis, and Milwaukee. City Assessor Timm stated that Plover has an in-house assessor and they are similar in size.

In answer to Council Member Arnett's question, City Administrator Hilvo explained that he was able to get one quote before the meeting but will do more research and get additional quotes. He added that a low bid isn't always best because incorrect assessments could cost the City in the long run.

Mayor O'Keefe indicated that he was leaning towards contracting for Assessor services. Now would be a good time to try this route for possibly one year. Mayor O'Keefe explained that this decision is no reflection on Assessor Timm's performance or career, as he appreciates her work for the City, and she will be difficult to replace.

Motion made by Council Member Verhaalen, seconded by Council Member Lythjohan, to have City Administrator Hilvo pursue contract Assessor services with flexibility in length of contract. Motion carried without a negative vote with Council Member Bublitz excused.

Council Member Burkart asked that the bids include contract pricing for the revaluation.

Attorney Herbrand explained that the RFPs can also include one-year bids along with alternate three-year bids.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Council Member Arnett, seconded by Council Member Bublitz, to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 p.m. Motion carried without a negative vote with Council Member Burkart excused.

Amy D. Kletzien, MMC/WCPC
Deputy City Clerk