

**CITY OF NISSWA
MINUTES – SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2020 – 5:00 PM
NISSWA CITY HALL**

The special meeting of the Nisswa City Council was held on Thursday, June 25, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. at City Hall and was available on YouTube Live.

Members present: Hoff, Jacobson, Johnson, Ryan

Members absent: Heidmann

Also, present: City staff - Jenny Max, Jon Stainbrook, Tom Blomer, City Attorney Tom Pearson, the Echo Newspaper.

Audience members: 20

A. Call to Order – Acting Mayor Gary Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

B. Council discussion re: Mayor Heidmann’s Facebook comments

1. Opening Remarks – City Council – City Administrator Jenny Max read a statement prepared by Mayor Fred Heidmann.

“Good afternoon,

My Apologies for not being able to attend today’s special meeting. The two council members who put together this meeting, Councilman Gary Johnson and Councilman Mike Hoff chose to do so knowing that I would not be able to attend, which seems odd since I am the person who Mr. Ulm and Mr. Kennedy had inquired about. I am requesting they give an explanation for their actions for the record.”

Councilmember Gary Johnson stated that he felt the need to call a meeting as soon as possible and this date was the soonest a meeting could be scheduled. Jenny Max continued reading the statement prepared by Mayor Heidmann.

“Councilman Gary Johnson also misrepresented his knowledge at the council meeting on June 17th when he told the public that he did not know the reason for my absence. He had been instructed before the meeting (and hence the reason for filling in for the evening) along with the rest of the council that I would not be in attendance due to work load that day as I was short of staff and had 20 plus pieces of machinery to pick up between 4pm and 9pm.

In conjunction, my reason for not being in attendance was not announced at the beginning of the meeting for the public as it should have been. It is critical that city staff see that all pertinent information be part of the record and accurate for the public knowledge and future record. This failed to happen and caused unneeded speculation. This is another point of change I have been pushing for our city. I did exchange emails with Mr. Ulm yesterday, it was good we were able to connect. I again want to reiterate that I support the first amendment and your right to express your concerns. That right is the most important right we have.

Please feel free to call me if you would like to get together for conversation. See our Administrator for my contact information.

*Respectfully,
Fred Heidmann*

Jenny Max read another prepared statement from Mayor Heidmann:

“I hear there are emails being sent to city hall today in opposition to my first amendment rights. I want to make the council aware that I also have people emailing, calling and stopping me on the street, stopping by the store and are furious at Mr. Ulm, over his antics. Also they are critical of the city council and city attorney for they’re roll in this. Please remember the first amendment is for every American and that should not be silenced by those who think they should control the narrative. The silent Majority is watching this meeting very closely as well. They will not be in attendance tonight, but none the less are right there. These are the words I am hearing.

Councilmember Gary Johnson explained the reason for the Special Meeting was to make known the Nisswa City Council’s opposition and rejection of the comments made by Mayor Heidmann on Facebook. Johnson stated that the City will be putting a statement together that defines the city’s stance on these issues.

- 2. Public Comment** – Councilmember Mike Hoff stated that the City Council waited for a little while to schedule the Special Meeting because the City Council was allowing Mayor Heidmann the opportunity to respond to these questions and concerns on his own; but as he did not respond they called the meeting.

Biff Ulm, Bob Fier, Will Just, Molly Kennedy, Deb Cruz, Sandy Potthoff, and Ann Bliss addressed the Council regarding Mayor Heidmann’s comments on Facebook.

The City Council discussed the creation of a social media policy and an ethics policy that City employees and elected officials will need to abide by in the future.

Councilmember Mike Hoff addressed the statement by Mayor Heidmann insinuating that the Council had foreknowledge of his inability to attend the meeting. Hoff explained that the City Council does not have Mayor Heidmann’s work schedule and did not plan the meeting with knowledge that he would be unable to attend.

Johnson read a prepared statement regarding Mayor Heidmann’s comments on Facebook.

“While the City Council of Nisswa and the city of Nisswa support every person’s first amendment rights, we do not condone or support the comments made by our Mayor in a recent Facebook posting. We find the comments insulting and unacceptable and they do not, in any way represent the thoughts and feelings of the City Council nor the City of Nisswa.”

Hoff read his prepared statement regarding Mayor Heidmann's comments on Facebook.

"The City of Nisswa, Nisswa City Council and the Nisswa City Staff are an entity accepting of all individuals regardless of race, creed, ethnicity, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, religion or economic standing. We want everyone to feel accepted, whether you are a resident, visitor or business owner. We would hope that everybody enjoys what Nisswa is known for, "The Best Small Town in Minnesota." Come enjoy Nisswa without any worries."

The City Council discussed combining the statements from Johnson and Hoff. Councilmember Don Jacobson suggested the addition of a line in the statement encouraging the Mayor and the residents to make a renewed effort to meet regarding these issues. Following discussion, Motion by Jacobson, seconded by Ryan to approve the following public statement:

"While the City Council of Nisswa and the city of Nisswa support every person's first amendment rights, we do not condone or support the comments made by our Mayor in a recent Facebook posting. We find the comments insulting and unacceptable and they do not, in any way represent the thoughts and feelings of the City Council or the City of Nisswa.

The City of Nisswa, Nisswa City Council and the Nisswa City Staff are an entity accepting of all individuals regardless of race, creed, ethnicity, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, religion or economic standing. We want everyone to feel accepted, whether you are a resident, visitor or business owner. We would hope that everybody enjoys what Nisswa is known for, "The Best Small Town in Minnesota". Come enjoy Nisswa without any worries.

The City Council requests the Mayor and all parties with concerns get together to attempt to resolve their issues.

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Adjourn - There being no further business, Motion by Jacobson, seconded by Hoff to adjourn the Special City Council meeting at 5:53 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fred Heidmann, Mayor

Jenny Max, City Administrator