

305 N. Third Street, P. O. Box 375
Eldridge, Iowa 52748

Special City Council Meeting Minutes

The City of Eldridge, Iowa City Council met in an open session at Eldridge City Hall at 5:04pm on June 26, 2023.

Council Members Present: Dan Collins, Brian Dockery, Bruce Cheek, Bernie Peeters, Adrian Blackwell

Presiding: Mayor Frank King

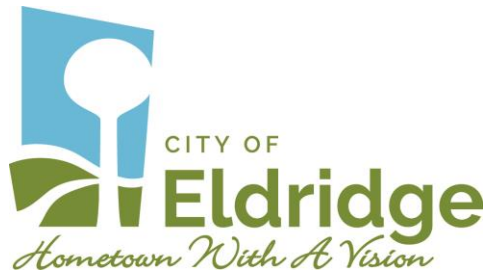
Others in Attendance: Administrator Nevada Lemke, Chief Joe Sisler, Assistant Fire Chief Dave Engler

Public: Marty O'Boyle, Erin Gentz

Motion by Blackwell to Approve the Agenda. Second by Cheek. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

The Council discussed proposed Resolution 2023-18 to ban aerial fireworks during the County wide burn ban for the July 3-4 dates in the City of Eldridge. Councilman Blackwell recommended that due to the extremely dry conditions, for the safety of residents and property, that all fireworks be banned for the upcoming July 4th holiday. Councilman Peeters stated that this is a huge time for family celebrations and get together, and our residents have been responsible with fireworks in previous years. He recommended we push out extra safety precautions in the newspaper and social media. Councilman Dockery stated that burn bans are meant for open burns, and other cities and planning to still do their firework displays. He asked how this resolution was first brought up; Councilman Blackwell informed him it was brought up at the City Council meeting that earlier that week. Chief Sisler stated that either way, the police would still do enforcement, and that there would still be people violating the ordinance. Assistant Fire Chief Dave Engler stated that they have been battling more ditch fires than usual, many likely started by items such as cigarettes being discarded. He further stated we are at a higher risk this year with the prolonged dry conditions, and echoed Chief Sisler's concern that violators will still be an issue as in any year. Councilman Dockery stated that the County has not banned aerial fireworks, and he doesn't want to punish law abiding citizens. Chief Sisler stated that they would enforce a zero tolerance, with no warnings, and would encourage residents to take a photo or video if they see someone illegally shooting off fireworks. Councilman Blackwell suggested a delay in the days allowed to use fireworks, and to allow them on another date when the burn ban is lifted, to err on the side of caution.

Councilman Collins stated that this neighborhood has a firework display every year for the past 16 years, and the neighbors come together and do this responsibly. As a fire captain, he also considers that there is no control over where remnants of aerial fireworks land and we are at a particularly high risk this year. He further noted that



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Parkview plans to cancel their fireworks show to avoid liability. Councilman Cheek stated he is torn, as he understands the issue on both sides.

Administrator Lemke shared the guidance of the Scott County Emergency Management Agency related to the burn ban and the use of fireworks, and further shared the Fire Chief's concern, in determining the origin of a fire if a neighboring property gets damaged or destroyed due to fireworks being used by residents.

Councilman Blackwell stated that we are not taking away freedoms and we can still be patriotic without using fireworks.

Assistant Chief Engler stated the importance of enforcement by the police department, as the risk is much higher this year.

Councilman Cheek asked about updating our ordinance for fireworks to include a burn ban clause, so we do not revisit this issue in coming years. He stated people already made plans and purchased their fireworks this year and we are only a week out from the holiday. Councilman Dockery reiterated that the County should be responsible for issuing a countywide ban on aerial fireworks. Councilman Peeters stated many residents won't support a ban, especially on such short notice.

Mayor King confirmed that cities can change the dates/times that fireworks are allowed under the State Code and suggested that the newspaper publish EMA's guidance and further offers additional safety measures and precautions for residents to take to ensure responsible use of fireworks this holiday season.

The Council discussed the forecast for the next week and the opportunity to revisit the discussion if necessary, over the coming days leading up to the 4th of July holiday.

Councilman Dockery made a motion to table the resolution, and instead publish a notice to take extra safety precautions if using fireworks this year. Second by Peeters. Roll call vote indicated Cheek (aye), Peeters (aye), Dockery (aye), Collins (aye), Blackwell (nay). Motion passes 4-1.

Dockery made a motion to adjourn at 5:55pm. Second by Blackwell. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Submitted by Nevada Lemke