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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 26, 2024

Richland Center, WI. – Last night, the Common Council of the City of Richland Center held a special session to discuss, in part, the Council’s oversight of the City’s Utility Commission. City Attorney Michael Windle, who had previously been tasked with reviewing the City’s Code of Ordinances and the Council’s committee structure, presented his conclusion to the Council regarding the Commission, first emphasizing his recommendations related solely to the Utility Commission and that he had no opinion on, or intent to change, the operation of the City Utilities and the Utilities’ employees. Specifically, Windle informed the Council that in his opinion, based on his review of the operation of the Commission, the Council had three options for how to move forward.

The first option, according to Windle, would be to find a new City Administrator. While he indicated Administrator Oliphant had not indicated any intention to resign, he stated that in his experience the relationship between the Administrator and the Commission was such that eventually she would find herself unable to continue in her employment. The second was to remove every sitting commissioner, because Windle was concerned that leaving one or more commissioners would create a situation where incoming commissioners could be influenced into engaging the same behaviors which led to the removal of their predecessors.

Windle’s final proposal, and the one he indicated was his strong recommendation, was to dissolve the Utility Commission and have the Council (or a committee) take on oversight of the Commission. Windle indicated his concerns about the level of independence with which the Commission was operating, the lack of cooperation with other City employees and departments, and their refusal to cooperate with oversight efforts from the Council and Administrator.

After Windle’s statements, Mayor Todd Coppernoll stated that the Council had elected not to take any action on the matter that night, but that the matter would be placed on the agenda for the Council’s next regular meeting. Coppernoll indicated that public comment would be invited during that meeting. All parties were emphatic that the community have the opportunity to express their opinions on a matter of such importance.

The next regular meeting of the Council will be at 6:30pm on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, located at 450 South Main Street, Richland Center, WI 53581. Details on public participation will be made available prior to the meeting. Questions regarding attendance should be directed to Interim Clerk Oliphant.

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