

Fertile City Council Minutes December 8, 2014

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, December 8, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Mayor Brian Nephew and Council members Todd Wise, Tanner Lehmann, Linda Widrig and Dennis Hasler. Also present were Administrator Lisa Liden, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Steve Emery from Widseth Smith Nolting, Dan Wilkens, and Twylla Altepeter.

There was no report for Fair Meadow Nursing Home since Barry Robertson was unable to complete the financial reports since he needed final information from the auditor to close out the fiscal year.

Kevin Nephew, Public Works Director, appeared before the Council to give his monthly report. Nephew reported that he had reviewed the budget for 2015 and felt that there were no changes necessary for Public Works and equipment needs. He also reported that the camouflage truck was currently in the shop. It had stopped running earlier in the day and would not restart. He believed that the issue was with the fuel pump. Nephew also reported that the new emergency beacons had been ordered and received.

Steve Emery from Widseth Smith Nolting then appeared before the Council to present the amended plans and specifications for the airport drainage project. Emery explained that it was necessary to change the earlier plan to conform to changes that the Watershed Board had recommended. Emery did report that while the Watershed Board had recommended the installation of a culvert on the north end of the runway the new plan included a ditch in that area rather than a culvert. He explained that the State would not participate in funding for a culvert since they didn't see the need for one.

Emery then went over the changes that had been made to the plans for the project. The main change was that the ditch to the east of the runway had been extended about 300 feet further north. This would make a better angle where that ditch joined the ditch on the north end. He further explained that the ditch on the north end had been moved closer to the property line resulting in the runway run-off clear zone area being extended to about 1200 feet off the runway rather than the 300 feet in the original plan.

Dan Wilkens, Sandhill River Watershed Administrator, then inquired whether or not the State would consider tiling on the north end rather than an open ditch. He stated that the installation of a culvert in that area would save some costs on the dirt moving and storage that was involved in the elevations work for the project. This was followed by a discussion on how much dirt was to be moved and how much excess would be stored after project completion.

Emery explained that the current bid schedule called for the bids to be opened at 11 a.m. on January 8th. The bids would then be tabulated and ready to present to the Council at the January 12th meeting. Wilkens then commented that the new plans would have to be submitted to the Watershed along with a new ditch permit request. He stated also that the bid schedule was a little tight considering that there would be no time to amend the plans if the Watershed board had further recommendations or changes. Emery explained that the bid schedule could be modified if necessary to accommodate possible further changes by the Watershed.

After further discussion, Council member Widrig made the motion to approve the amended plans and specifications and to move forward on bids for the airport drainage project. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

This was followed by a discussion on the recurring issues with water discoloration. Kevin Nephew explained that the water was clear when it left the treatment plant so it wasn't a treatment issue but more of a problem in the distribution system. Steve Emery stated that it was difficult to pin down the cause of the problem when it was occurring at random times at various locations throughout the system. This was followed by a discussion

on the cleaning of the media at the treatment plant and how often the media should be cleaned. Nephew explained that they had gone through the complete cleaning process last summer and that it wouldn't need to be done again for another four or five years.

Administrator Liden then gave a brief report on Agassiz Environmental Learning Center. Liden reported that the AELC would again be advertising to fill the position of Education Director. The current Director, Jennifer Dillard, was leaving the position to move with her husband to South Africa. He had accepted a position with a wildlife conservation group to work as a bush pilot in the Congo and would be working to save wild elephants. Nephew then reported that Ms. Dillard would be in contact with some classes at the school and would be keeping them updated on their conservation work in South Africa.

Mayor Nephew then inquired about the schedule for opening the skating rink. Kevin Nephew reported that the rink had been flooded on Friday and several other times over the course of the weekend, so it would soon be ready. Liden explained that three high school students had been hired to work at the rink for the winter.

After a review of the minutes of the November 10, 2014 meeting, Council member Hasler made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was carried.

A review of the Treasurer's Report and Bills was presented by Administrator Liden. Liden went over the receipts and disbursements for the month of November as well as a brief overview of the budget to actual report. Liden also reported that an estimate of cash in City accounts at year-end showed an anticipated balance of over \$550,000 which is the highest year-end balance in recent history.

After a brief discussion on future equipment needs, Council member Lehmann made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report and Bills as presented. The motion was seconded by Council member Hasler and was carried.

The next agenda item that was addressed was the 2015 final budget. Liden went over the few changes that had been made since the preliminary budget was approved in September. She explained that the associated personnel costs had been updated to reflect the salary increases for 2015 that the Council had approved at November's meeting. A couple of other expense accounts had also been increased slightly to reflect the new projection numbers for 2014. Finally, the amount budgeted for machinery capital improvements had been increased from \$25,000 to \$40,000 to allow for the purchase of a different mower as well as saving further funds for the future upgrade of the road grader.

After some questions and further discussion of the budget, Council member Hasler made the motion, seconded by Council member Wise, to approve the budget for 2015 as presented. The motion was carried.

The final levy for 2015 was then reviewed. Mayor Nephew stated that the levy amount for 2015 was the same as in 2014 so there had been no increase. Council member Wise then made the motion to approve Resolution #12-1-14 City Clerk's Certificate of Final Tax Levy. The motion was seconded by Council member Hasler and was carried.

The next item addressed on the agenda was the establishment of a capital improvements reserve fund. Liden explained that the 2014 budget included \$69,000 in five different capital equipment and building expense accounts. Based on the new year-end projections, Liden estimated that only \$15,657 of that amount would be spent in the current year which left over \$53,000 in the budget for capital improvements. Based on this information, Liden recommended that \$50,000 be put into a capital improvement reserve fund to save for future capital needs. Liden explained further that the funds would be invested in CD's with TD Ameritrade and that the auditor's would see that the funds were properly designated on the financial statements.

After further discussion, Council member Wise made the motion to establish a capital improvement reserve fund of \$50,000. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was carried.

Tobacco licenses for 2015 was the next item addressed. Council member Widrig made a motion to approve 2015 tobacco licenses for JT's Station, Northside Express, Al & Laura's Foods, The Other Place and Side Street Bar and Grill. The motion was seconded by Council member Hasler and was carried.

The final agenda item that was addressed was the replacement of the Nature Center roof. Liden explained that she had received three quotes for materials from Fertile Building Center but had not yet received cost information on installation. The Building Center had provided quotes on shingles, barn tin, and also higher end tin with hidden fasteners. Liden further explained that there wasn't enough information at this time to make a decision but that the item was on the agenda to reassure the Learning Center Board that the Council was aware of the need to replace the roof and that there was money in the budget to have it done in 2015. This was followed by a discussion on the cost estimates for the project as well as cost estimates for a possible building expansion.

Dan Wilkens then asked to address the Council and he distributed information packets to each Council member. Wilkens began by stating that page one of his information was a page out of the City Code stating that the airport commission will be made up of five members. Since there were currently only three on the commission he asked when the commission members would be appointed. Mayor Nephew responded that the airport commission would be appointed when the annual appointments were made at the January meeting.

Wilkens then asked the Council to refer to the other pages in his information packet that he had copied from the City Code and also Minnesota State Statutes. He explained that the information was on the residency requirements to serve as Mayor or Council in the City of Fertile. He went on to state that, in his opinion, Mayor Nephew didn't meet the residency requirement to serve as Mayor. He stated also that he has received several phone calls from residents who also question Nephew's residency and his eligibility to serve. Wilkens went on to state that ultimately it was up to the Council to decide whether or not Mayor Nephew should continue on as Mayor.

Mayor Nephew responded by stating that he did meet the residency requirement and that the issue would be put to rest in a few months time once a personal matter was resolved.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Brian Nephew, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator