

Fertile City Council Minutes

June 12, 2017

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, June 12, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Mayor Daniel Wilkens and Council members Linda Widrig, Stanton Wang, Reid Jensrud, and Todd Wise. Also present were Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, City Administrator Lisa Liden, Fair Meadow Nursing Home Administrator Angie Leiting, and Twylla Altepeter from the Fertile Journal. Other visitors were Justin and Mackinzie Burke, Peggy Erickson, Marla Swenson, Sara Iverson, Kathi Lindberg, Dani Nelson, Luther and Marilyn Halstensgard, Cheryl Hegg, Linda Aanenson, Terry Baumgartner, John Swanson, Julie Bak, Jeanice Horton, Michelle Gunufson, Lynda Baskerville, Elaine Ostgarden, Jacklynn Dahl, Ashley Tucker, Becky Tucker, Cindy Abrahamson, Gayle Haugen, Teresa Christianson, Paula Tice, Andrea Larson, Heather Larson, Kelsey Braun, Lilah Wang, Richard Wellman, Dr. Bruce Ring, Tammy Franklin, Heather Cavalier, Corbin Cavalier, Peter Cavalier, Myles Jensrud, Greg Mercil, Marg Mercil, Joe Leiting, Jennifer Carlson, Kim Carlson, Jeff and Lori Adams, Andrea Broden, Heidi Larson, Steve Poissant, MaryJo Klinkhammer, Amber Finseth, Byron Ness, Jason and Patty Benbo, Cindy McCollum, Chloe Leiting, Carol Swenby and Darlene Swenby.

The agenda was approved on a motion by Council member Jensrud that was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

Mayor Wilkens then explained that there would be a 15 minute time period for public comments. Cheryl Hegg questioned the time limit on comments and Mayor Wilkens explained that there was a long agenda to address since this was the regular monthly meeting, and that there needed to be a time limit on comments in order to address the other agenda items which included a Public Hearing at 7 p.m.

Peggy Erickson then inquired whether another special meeting could be called to discuss the Fair Meadow operational assessment. Mayor Wilkens explained that the matter had already been discussed at great length in previous meetings and that there were basically three options available. The first option would be to move forward on the full assessment as was approved at the May 8th meeting. The second option would be to change that motion and to approve just the first phase of the assessment. The third option would be to do no assessment at all.

As there were no further comments, the public comments were closed.

The consent agenda which included the parade permit, 5K permit and temporary liquor licenses for the Polk County Fair was the next item on the agenda. The consent agenda was approved on a motion by Council member Wang that was seconded by Council member Jensrud and carried.

The minutes of the May 8th regular meeting and May 17th and May 25th special meetings were approved on a motion by Council member Wang that was seconded by Council member Widrig and carried. An audience member then inquired as to why the minutes were published in the Journal before they were formally approved. Mayor Wilkens explained that this was a new policy that was approved earlier in the year. This allowed for the minutes to be published and put on the City website so that residents could be informed on a more timely business about City matters and decisions that the Council had made.

City Administrator Liden then presented the Treasurer's Report and Bills. After a brief review of the receipts and disbursements for the month of May, as well as some of the out of the ordinary checks that had been written, Council member Wise made the motion to approve the Treasurer's Report and Bills as presented. The motion was seconded by Council member Jensrud and was carried.

Fair Meadow Nursing Home Administrator Angie Leiting then gave her Administrator's Report. She reported that the month of May began with 42 residents and ended at 42, operating at 98.69% occupancy. Angie also noted that was the highest occupancy rate the home had reported since 2012. The home had also provided 359 home delivered meals. Leiting then went over the financial reports for the month and noted first of all that the loss for the month of May for the nursing home was due to two Medicaid payments that were not approved and received until early June. She noted also that the final payment for the renovation project had been made to CDI.

Leiting then gave a brief review of the checks written for the month of May and noted also that she had provided more detail in the report so Council could see what the checks had been written for. Council member Wang then asked to see the statement for Chase Card and Leiting said that she would provide that. She explained also that the check for Morris Press was for printing of cookbooks for the anniversary of the home and that they would be sold for \$10 each. Also noted was the check to Verathon which Leiting explained was for the annual recalibration of the bladder scanner. Leiting ended by noting that the family picnic and anniversary celebration would be held on June 22nd at the nursing home.

The next item addressed on the agenda was the bid opening for the lot that had been advertised for sale in the Journal. Administrator Liden explained that only one bid had been received. Mayor Wilkens then opened the sealed bid and read that Justin and Mackenzie Burke had submitted a bid for \$20,000 which was the minimum bid for the property. They stated also that they would draft the deed, and pay the deed tax and recording fee. They would also take the title as is as long as the City is willing to sign any documents necessary to clear the title.

A motion was then made by Council member Wise to accept the bid as submitted by Burke's. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried. When asked whether the nursing home or the City would be receiving the proceeds from the sale, Mayor Wilkens replied that the nursing home would since they had originally paid for the property.

The operational assessment was the next item up on the agenda. Mayor Wilkens explained that the Council had approved moving forward on a full operational assessment at the May 8th Council meeting.

Council member Widrig then read a brief statement explaining that the Council had started this process with only good intentions of having a good place to work for all employees. She went on to say that at no time has Council said anything but positive comments about the care that the residents receive at the home and that Council has never once even mentioned selling the home. Widrig then explained that she feels Fair Meadow has lost good, caring and wonderful staff because of management and that when Council receives letters of complaint that they cannot let that slide. Widrig then read a few sentences from an anonymous letter that she had received and that had also been received by Council members Wang and Jensrud.

This was then followed by a discussion on the value of letters and complaints when they are unsigned. Widrig responded that she and other Council members had received phone calls in which the same and similar complaints were expressed as those in the anonymous letter. Jacklynn Dahl, an employee of the nursing home then thanked Widrig for sharing the letter stating that it was good to hear both sides and also that she could understand why the letter was not signed. Kelsey Braun then commented that the letter did not bring up any real issues and Widrig explained that she had only read a portion of the letter and that there were some real concerns expressed in the remainder of the letter. An audience member then inquired whether or not these concerns had been shared with nursing home administration and Widrig stated that some of them had been brought up to administration.

A motion was then made by Council member Wise, and seconded by Council member Jensrud to close the regular meeting. Mayor Wilkens then opened the Public Hearing that was scheduled regarding property tax

abatements for TDS. There were no public comments or questions, so the the Public Hearing was closed on a motion by Council member Jensrud, seconded by Council member Wang.

The regular meeting was then reopened and motion was made by Council member Widrig to approve Resolution #6-1-17, A Resolution Approving Property Tax Abatements for TDS Fertilizer Inc. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

Council then returned to discussion of the operational assessment of Fair Meadow. Mayor Wilkens stated again that there were three options available. The first was to go ahead with the full assessment that was already approved. The second was to go with phase 1, or the paperwork portion of the assessment. The final option was to cancel having the assessment done altogether.

Kathi Lindberg of the Fair Meadow Advisory Board then handed out a letter to those present stating that it was from Fair Meadow employees. Those present then read the letter.

After Council had finished reading the letter, Council member Wang made the motion to move forward with the full assessment. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise.

This motion was followed by further discussion and questions from those present in the audience. One audience member questioned what “efficiency” means in relation to the assessment. Mayor Wilkens explained that to him efficiency means doing something well at the lowest cost possible. Someone also questioned whether Council wanted Fair Meadow Nursing Home to operate for profit. Mayor Wilkens responded that the home needs to operate at enough of a profit to stay open. Mayor Wilkens then went over some information in Fair Meadow’s audit that someone had given him at the previous special meeting. He read from the notes of the audit that indicated that profits had been going down at the home. Wilkens indicated that it appeared things were going in the “wrong direction” and that it was his hope that the assessment would turn things around to move in a better direction.

Peggy Erickson then expressed her concerns about jobs being lost and stated that you have to spend money to make money. Cheryl Hegg then commented that the losses in the past were due to low occupancy. This was followed by a discussion on the increased paperwork that’s required for medicare and Medicaid reimbursement.

Mayor Wilkens then called for a vote on the motion that was made for moving forward on the full assessment. Council members Wang and Wise voted to approve the motion while Council members Widrig and Jensrud voted no on the motion. Mayor Wilkens then voted yes to break the tie and the motion was carried.

Byron Ness then asked to address those present. He began by stating that both of his parents had been taken care of at Fair Meadow and that he was very happy with the excellent care they received. He then stated that he has been on the Board of Directors for Garden Valley for many years and that Garden Valley has an assessment done every five years. He explained further that it’s a good business practice to have these assessments done and that any fears of job loss are probably unfounded.

Kevin Nephew, Director of Public Works, then gave his report to the Council. He reported first of all that there had been no applicants for the part-time summer mowing job that had been advertised. Administrator Liden then asked Council approval for Nephew and herself to make the hiring decision should a qualified applicant apply for the position.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to give Liden and Nephew the authority to hire a qualified applicant should one apply. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and carried.

Nephew then gave an update on the Park Project. He was still waiting for one concrete bid and one construction bid. The trees had all been removed from the building site and that he would be pulling the stumps and taking out the wading pool later in the week. Council member Wise then questioned the size of the skating rink and the number of trees that needed to be removed to accommodate it. Mayor Wilkens commented that the new rink would be official hockey league size so it could not only be used for hockey but there would also be plenty of room for skating. Council member Jensrud commented that the current rink sometimes got crowded when there were many families there skating. This was followed by discussion on replacing the trees that were taken out by planting more trees either in the park or elsewhere in the community. Council member Jensrud stated that he would get in touch with Joe Bergeson to discuss the matter.

After discussion of the matter, a Park Committee meeting was scheduled for Monday, June 19th at 8:30 a.m. to review any further bids if they were received and also to look at the layout and get some levels on the property.

Brian King and Alex Ranz then gave the City Engineer report. They began by giving an update on the easements that were required for the RV dump station. There was already an easement in place for the dump station itself, but they felt it was prudent to get an ingress and egress easement to protect access to the dump station should the property be sold in the future. The legal descriptions for the easements had been forwarded to Administrator Liden and she had forwarded them to the City Attorney to draw up the documents.

The next item that was discussed was the Capital Improvement Plan that Ranz was currently working on. Ranz and Nephew had met and gone over the maps of the water system to review sizes and ages of the current water lines. This was followed by a discussion on where the undersized lines were located and whether or not those should be replaced first. Nephew commented that ideally he would like to look at doing ten blocks or so of street work and to replace the water lines that are under those streets. Brian King then explained that from a funding standpoint that it would work best to look at which lines were priorities that also coincided with streets that need work since funding for water improvements was more favorable than funding for street maintenance work. King stated that he would work on numbers for funding formulas and would explore funding possibilities to present to Council.

The engineer discussion then turned to the airport. Brian King explained that he and Dan Triller, Ulteig's Aviation Engineer, had held a long phone conference with MnDOT to discuss airport funding and the City's Capital Improvement Plan. For the next two years, the State funding for smaller airports would be the same as the Federal rate with the State picking up 95% of the costs. Triller had also learned that the City's airport layout plan was still good, so it wouldn't need to be updated. King also explained that they were looking into how extensive the environmental impact study would need to be for the runway resurfacing project. He also stated that the airport zoning would need to be underway before the State would approve any further projects.

Administrator Liden commented that in order to update the Capital Improvement Plan with MnDOT that the City would need solid numbers for the zoning, environmental impact study, and for the runway widening and resurfacing.

Administrator Liden then gave the Administrator's report for the month of May. She reported that much of her activity centered around preparing for and attendance at the special meetings that had been held in May and also in preparation of the Car Show which was held the previous Saturday. She reported that there were 83 cars that registered for the show and Council member Wang commented that they had physically counted 125 cars in the show so there were some that had not registered.

Mayor Wilkens then brought up the fact that it was difficult at times for Liden to get Council packets finished on Friday when agenda items were added late in the week. He felt that there should be a cut-off time earlier in the week to allow Liden time to get packets done without having to complete them on Saturday.

After further discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Jensrud to establish a 5 p.m. deadline on the Wednesday prior to the Monday Council meeting to get items added to the agenda. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

For the Agassiz Environmental Learning Center it was reported that a Board meeting should be scheduled soon. Mayor Wilkens also reported that Wayne Goeken was assisting Danielle Meunier with the application and master plan for the Parks of Regional Significance application. He reported that once the AELC was given that distinction, that they would be eligible for funding from the State and that sometimes operating expenses such as salaries could be covered by State funding.

Council member Jensrud gave the report for the fire department. He reported that the department had been on two calls for grass fires and one medical call. The department had also had all their pumpers tested and that one truck had needed repairs. He ended by stating that fitness testing would be done in August.

The report for the Airport Commission was then given. Mayor Wilkens reported on the last meeting and stated that the City currently had an active Commission that was dedicated to improving the airport. They were trying to make the Flying Club more active and also trying to line up a pilot to offer flight instruction using the Club's airplane. He also reported that the Commission was interested in selecting an airport engineer for projects at the airport and assistance with becoming a NPIAS (Federal) airport. Mayor Wilkens reported that Randy Aarestad is involved with the Hillsboro Airport and that they use Mead & Hunt for their Engineer. Tom Rongen who is involved with the Grafton Airport also uses Mead & Hunt.

After further discussion on airport engineer services, Council member Jensrud made the motion to not do a separate RFP for airport engineer services. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig. Council members Widrig, Jensrud and Wang voted in favor of the motion and Council member Wise and Mayor Wilkens voted no on the motion. Motion carried.

The next item up on the agenda was a property in town that needed cleaning up. Administrator Liden reported that there were several inoperable cars located on the property and that she had already sent two clean up letters with no visible response made to address the problem. She said that the next step in the process was to hold a Public Hearing on the matter to have the property formally declared a public nuisance since that opened up more options to abate the problem.

Council member Jensrud then made the motion to call for a Public Hearing at the July meeting to consider declaring this property a public nuisance. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The Priority List for 2017 was then reviewed. Mayor Wilkens stated that he would like to hold a Public Meeting to get more input from residents on whether or not leaf burning should be allowed within the City. He would like to schedule that Public Meeting for closer to fall.

The meeting ended with further discussion on the operational assessment that had been approved for Fair Meadow.

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Council member Jensrud.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator