

Fertile City Council Minutes December 9, 2019

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, December 9, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Todd Wise, Linda Widrig, and Stanton Wang. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting, City Engineer Alex Ranz, Twylla Altepeter from the Fertile Journal, and Ashley Hand.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wilkens at 6:30 and began with those present reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Next was the Public Comments portion of the meeting and Ashley Hand asked to address Council regarding a snow removal issue. She explained that when the end of her dead-end street was plowed, the snow was pushed in a pile at the edge of the field. When the snow melts in the spring, her back yard floods as a result. She wanted to know if the snow could be pushed out further east into the field. Kevin Nephew began by explaining that he has been doing the snowplowing differently at their end of the street this year and that he was winging the snow out to the east and would not be piling the snow as he has in past years.

Nephew also explained that everything past the paved end of Stephen Drive was private driveway that the City technically isn't responsible for plowing. He's always plowed it anyway since going past the end of Stephen Drive allows him more options for piling the snow. He further explained that the end of the street is lower than the field to the east so it wouldn't help at all to pile it further out in the field since all the water would drain to the west anyway. Discussion was then held on how and where a storm sewer could be located in that area to alleviate the snow melt pooling up at the end of the street.

The minutes of the November 12, 2019 meeting were approved on a motion by Council member Widrig that was seconded by Council member Wang and carried.

City Administrator Lisa Liden next gave a brief overview of the financial statements and the out of the ordinary bills paid in November. The Treasurer's Report and Bills were approved on a motion by Council member Wang that was seconded by Council member Widrig and was carried.

The City Engineer's Report was given by Alex Ranz with Ulteig. Ranz reported that he was working on a Capital Improvement Plan for the City for Council to review in the spring. Mayor Wilkens reported that he had two representatives from the Fair Board to work with the City on the plans for the new RV campground at the old skating rink location. Ranz said that he would work on setting up a meeting date.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave her report to Council. She reported that the month of November began and ended with 40 residents, operating at 94.84% capacity for the month. They had also served 221 home delivered meals. Leiting noted that the month end cash balance was good despite three payrolls during the month of November. The profit and loss for the month of November showed a loss of just over \$87,000 with the nursing home reporting a loss of just over \$78,000 and the assisted living a loss of slightly over \$9,000. The loss was primarily since there were three payrolls for the month.

Leiting briefly reviewed the budget to actual report and noted that while expenses were low, revenue was also down. Leiting noted that they had not yet received payment from Medicare for October and November. She reported also that the Medicare resident days for the first two months of the current fiscal year were significantly higher than last year. There had been more Medicare resident days in two months than there had been in the entire previous year. Leiting reported that they were now able to do IV therapy at the home and that due to the large number of Medicare resident days that some of expenses would be significantly higher than their budget.

Appointments to the Fair Meadow Advisory Board were then addressed. Angie Leiting explained that the end of Carolyn Christian's term was up, and that Jon Swanson wanted to step down from his position so two seats would be available. She had contacted several people who were thinking it over, but one person, Barb Jensrud, had agreed to serve.

A motion was made by Council member Wang to appoint Barb Jensrud to the Fair Meadow Advisory Board. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was carried.

Kevin Nephew, Public Works Director, gave his report to Council. He began by asking about the rear yard setback change to the zoning ordinance and whether that was the only change to the setbacks. Administrator Liden explained that only the rear yard setback was being changed and that the change would make the requirement 10 feet rather than 25% of lot depth. Nephew agreed with the change since 10 feet was all that was required for snow removal in the alleys.

Mayor Wilkens asked how the new grader was working and Nephew stated that it was working well. The machine had much more horsepower and much better traction. Nephew went on to explain that Dan Lene was using the truck to clear the streets on the west end of town but that it was taking much longer with the truck since more passes were required. Doing it that way got the streets done faster by about an hour but that after that they still had five plus hours of driveways to clear. He noted that the truck gets stuck easily unless the back end is loaded with sand. He reported that they had sanded all the streets and had gone through seven tons of sand doing so. Last year they had used a total of 15 tons for the entire winter.

Discussion was then held on snow removal procedures and what changes would be made with the new equipment. Nephew noted that the truck didn't work very well on gravel since the front-end bounces too bad. It also got stuck at the airport so they still weren't certain if it could be used there either. Discussion was also held on clearing driveway ends with a couple on Council questioning why the City even does that.

Kevin Nephew reported that he had also been dealing with a couple of other issues. One of them involved a lift station pump. The pump itself was working fine, but it was tripping at the electric panel and shutting down. He was working with Downs to see if the panel would have to be changed out or if the pump should be converted to a variable start. The other issue was the backwash computer panel at the treatment plant. The backlite on the panel had gone out so he couldn't go in and change any of the programming for the backwash. The backwash itself was functioning fine. Nephew ended by asking if he should stay at the meeting for the budget discussion and Mayor Wilkens said he could stay if he wished to.

Council member Widrig explained that she would soon have to leave the meeting to go to the school for a basketball game and that she would like to address the matter of the wage increases for 2020 before leaving. She said that she had met with the Personnel Committee regarding the wage increases and that she would like to see 3% raises across the board. She didn't agree with the market rate increases and felt that Council should wait until a formal wage study is done. Then if market rate increases were warranted, the changes could be made retroactively to January 1st. Council member Widrig then left the meeting at 7:50.

City Administrator Liden gave the Administrator's Report. The report was briefly reviewed and Liden explained that she was continuing her work with FEMA and the required paperwork for reimbursement of flood repair expenses. Discussion was also held on getting the skating rink ready to open for the season. Kevin Nephew explained that he had flooded two times already and that it would take two more times to get the level up and over the dasher board footings. If the weather and temperatures cooperated, it could be ready by the following weekend and that it would open in time for Christmas break.

Under the Learning Center Mayor Wilkens explained that no one had been hired yet for the open Educator position. He explained also that they were trying to expand the AELC board to eleven positions. They had increased it to ten board members but then some of the current board had retired so they were still working on filling open positions. He ended by reporting that a letter had been submitted to Polk County seeking \$10,000 in annual funding for the

Learning Center. The request was submitted too late for the 2020 budget cycle, but the request would be made again for 2021.

Under the Fire Department, Council member Wang reported that the department had responded to three calls in November. One was for a grass fire, another for a grass/baler fire, and a third call for a vehicle in the ditch which was canceled so they were called back.

Mayor Wilkens then gave the airport update. The lighting project was done and the PAPI flight check had been completed the week before. Kevin Nephew reported that the lights wouldn't work for the flight check but that it turned out to be a burnt-out resistor that was easily replaced in time for the flight check to be completed. There were a few obstructions found on the PAPI flight, but they were all trees that would just need to be trimmed.

Under Old Business, the vacant Council seat was discussed. There had been no applicants, so it was decided to advertise two more times.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to close the regular meeting to hold a Public Hearing on Ordinance #2019-1. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

Mayor Wilkens opened the Public Hearing. There being no questions or comments on the Ordinance, the Public Hearing was closed on a motion by Council member Wise that was seconded by Council member Wang and carried.

The regular meeting was reconvened, and a motion was made by Council member Wise to pass Ordinance #2019-1 An Ordinance Amending Chapter 9 – Animals, Chapter 111 – Alcoholic Beverages, and Chapter 152 – Zoning Regulations of the Fertile City Code. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

Resolution #12-1-19 was next on the agenda. Administrator Liden briefly explained that this was a resolution that needed to be passed each year. A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve Resolution #12-1-19 A Resolution Designating Polling Places for 2020. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

Tobacco licenses for 2020 for JT's Station, Northside Express, The Other Place and Al & Laura's Foods were up for consideration. The licenses for all four establishments were approved on a motion by Council member Wang that was seconded by Council member Wise and carried.

The next item up for discussion was the need to hold a Public Hearing for a hazardous building. Administrator Liden explained that the inspection report had been completed on the JR Dale building on Second Street and that the next step in the process would be to hold a Public Hearing to review the report and make a formal decision on what needed to be done in regard to the building. Administrator Liden noted that the Public Hearing notice would be published two times in the Journal and that a certified letter would be sent to JR Dale advising him of the hearing.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to call for a Public Hearing on the hazardous building on January 13th. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

Discussion then returned to the Personnel Committee's recommendation as to raises for 2020. Mayor Wilkens explained that the Personnel Committee had met two times and that he, Michelle Cote, April Grunhovd, Council member Widrig, Administrator Liden had been present for both meetings. The first meeting was spent mainly reviewing job descriptions and making a few updates. At that first meeting Liden was asked to get some wage information from some other cities for comparison purposes.

At the second meeting of the committee Liden explained that she had requested wage information from about 15 other cities but that only two had responded so far. She provided the committee with the wage information from those two cities as well as the wage scale from Fair Meadow. There was discussion on which positions were most

comparable to positions within the City of Fertile and how Fertile's wages compared to those other cities as well as Fair Meadow. Discussion was also held on information that Liden had received from the City of Baudette regarding having a formal wage study done by Baker Tilly and a step program developed.

Until such time a formal study could be done, the Personnel Committee determined that there were some market adjustments that could be made in the interim. It was determined to give employees a 2% cost of living adjustment across the board. An additional 1% would be given for the Public Works position as a market adjustment and an additional 6% for the City Administrator, the Public Works Director, and the Billing Clerk. It was determined that 6% would be a reasonable adjustment based on the comparable information that was reviewed. Mayor Wilkens noted that everyone on the Committee appeared to be in agreement with the recommendations and that there were no objections raised at the time by any committee members.

After further discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wise to approve the Personnel Committee's recommendations. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

The next item up for discussion was the budget for 2020. Administrator Liden explained that the only change made to the preliminary budget was to wages and salaries and a small adjustment made to the Fair Meadow rent amount based on new information.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve the 2020 budget as presented. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

A motion was then made by Council member Wang to approve Resolution #12-2-19 City Clerk's Certificate of Final Tax Levy in the amount of \$217,000 for 2020. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m. on a motion by Council member Wise.