

Fertile City Council Minutes February 11, 2019

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, February 11, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Todd Wise, Linda Widrig, Stanton Wang, and Reid Jensrud. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, City Engineer Alex Ranz and Twylla Altepeter from the Fertile Journal.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wilkens at 6:30. Council member Wang asked to add an agenda item regarding basketball in the auditorium. A motion was made by Council member Wang, seconded by Council member Jensrud to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried.

There were no public comments.

The minutes of the January 14, 2019 meeting were approved on a motion that was made by Council member Widrig that was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

City Administrator Lisa Liden then gave a brief overview of the financial statements and the out of the ordinary bills paid in January. A motion was made by Council member Widrig to approve the Treasurer's Report and Bills as presented. The motion was seconded by Council member Jensrud and was carried.

Alex Ranz then gave the City Engineer's report and he began by distributing a handout that would be available to residents at the February 26th open house that was scheduled. Ranz briefly reviewed the handout which covered the upcoming water project and gave information on why the project was necessary, descriptions of the areas where the construction would take place, the timeline of the project, and also the financing.

Ranz then gave an update on the Safe Routes to School application and explained that we would find out in mid-March which projects were selected for the coming year. He explained further that there was roughly \$1 million available in the State fund for the SRTS program and that the federal government sometimes matched the State amount.

The next item discussed under the Engineer's Report was putting together a Capital Improvement Plan for the City. Ranz explained that Ulteig would put together the report at no cost to the City and that it would be beneficial to the City to have a CIP in place for planning and budgeting. Administrator Liden then inquired about whether or not there were ever State funds available for road projects and Ranz stated that there weren't any funds this year but there may be funding available next year.

After further discussion on the matter, a motion was made by Council member Jensrud to approve moving forward on putting together a CIP for the City. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was carried.

Administrator Liden then reported on the rate study that was currently being done. The study would be completed by the end of the month and there would be a few options to choose from for funding the debt on the water project. Liden explained also that the person doing the rate study highly recommended that we change our current rate structure in addition to the rates themselves. The Dept. of Natural Resources highly recommends a rate structure that encourages water conservation and rate structures like the City's current one which allows for 2,500 gallons covered by the base rate were not very conservation oriented. Also, allowing for "free" gallons was not very fair to those residents who use far less than the 2,500 gallons allowed under the base rate. Liden explained that the recommendation for the new rates would likely include a lower base rate which would be renamed as an "availability rate" and that there would be no "free" gallons with the availability rate.

Fair Meadow Nursing Home Administrator Angie Leiting then gave her report to Council. She reported that they began and ended the month of January with 42 residents operating at 97.54% occupancy. They had also served 366 home delivered meals. Leiting also noted the cash balance on the balance sheet and that it was the highest it has been in many years.

Leiting then went over the profit and loss reports for January as well as for the current year to date. For the month of January the nursing home showed a profit of \$22,389 while the assisted living showed a loss of \$3,105. Leiting noted that there were still three empty units in the assisted living.

Kevin Nephew, Public Works Director, gave his report to Council and began by discussing snow removal efforts. He reported that the City has received 49 inches of snow so far this winter and that there are serious issues west of town on Old Mill Road and also at the airport. Nephew had talked to the County and they had gone out to the airport to blow some of the snow further back. Old Mill was getting quite narrow and was drifting in quite bad whenever there was wind and at the airport the snow was almost to the top of the runway lights. Nephew wasn't sure how much the County would charge for their work at the airport but that it was necessary to clear the airport as soon as possible and before we got any further wind storms.

Mayor Wilkens then inquired when MnDOT would be coming to clear the sides of Highway 32. Council member Jensrud stated that they should be able to come after the next big "blow" was over. Clearing snow in Fertile had been at the top of the list for a few weeks now but with all the storms, they were having to focus on their own snow removal.

Nephew then reported that the tractor was still being repaired at Titan since they were waiting for parts. Under the best case scenario the tractor would be returned by the end of the week. Council member Jensrud then asked whether the City should look at renting a payloader until the tractor is back. Jensrud noted also that Dwight Christian had said they had a truck the City could rent to haul snow if need be. Nephew said that the tractor could keep two trucks busy loading and unloading and that we may need to look at the option. Nephew noted also that he hoped the State would be able to pull the big snow pile off of the City lot behind Thrifty White.

Nephew went on to report that Garfield Township is looking at trading in their maintainer this summer and they would likely be willing to sell it to the City for trade-in value. The machine was seven or eight years old and purchasing at trade-in value could save the City about \$20,000.

Council member Jensrud then asked Nephew how it was going with the testing at the plant and if all the recommendations from Ulteig were being followed. Nephew stated that all the supplies were now in and that they were doing the testing. Nephew also noted that Ron from Ulteig had been in and reviewed the testing information. Council member Jensrud then asked if the documentation forms had been sent on to Ulteig and Nephew responded that Ron had reviewed them when he was in for his visit. Both Nephew and Administrator noted that with all the snow removal lately that it wasn't always possible to do the testing every single day.

Council member Jensrud then inquired about the computer that had been approved two months ago and if it had been ordered yet. Administrator Liden responded that she had been looking at the various options that were available and was questioning how much to spend and what kind of options to go with. She noted also that most laptops have touch screens and that she was concerned about the durability of that given how the laptop would be used and also transported on a regular basis. Council member Wise then recommended looking at a Panasonic Tough Book since they were virtually indestructible. Wise noted that they cost around \$2,000 but are well worth the added cost.

This was followed by a discussion on the recent water leak at the nursing home as well as water main breaks in general. Administrator Liden noted that MN Rural Water offered a leak location service and Nephew commented that he had them come down once already but that the detector doesn't work due to our sandy soil.

The conversation then returned to snow removal and Nephew noted that he would be meeting with Eric Engelstad to see if he could do some work on Old Mill Road. The banks were getting so high that he couldn't push the snow any further out.

Council member Wang then inquired about the snow in the alleys and how narrow some of them were becoming. Nephew explained that Tim Olson had been hired to come in to clear the fire hydrants and that he had also done

one alley. Nephew needed to find someone else with either a 80 horse or 100 horse blower to blow out the alleys. Council member Jensrud then asked if we should perhaps be proactive and take care of the alleys right away and Nephew stated that he hoped to get by until the Case tractor was back and then he could do the alleys.

The next item up on the agenda was the City Administrator's Report. Administrator Liden noted that a good deal of time was spent in January on preparing all the annual reports and filings that are required. She noted also that she had continued working with Alex Ranz on the planning for the open house meeting and also with Dan Triller of SEH on the airport projects. She ended by reporting that she had recently met with Mayor Wilkens, Rich Sanders, and Sand Hill River Watershed Administrator April Swenby regarding the upcoming bridge replacement on County Highway 1. Swenby was interested in working with the City and the County to see if the bridge design could include an area for parking and launching kayaks at that location.

Council member Jensrud then noted that there was an issue with the way that Council members' email addresses were shown on the City website. He noted that he was getting bombarded by spam email and then learned that the way the email addresses were shown on the website was the problem. Administrator Liden explained that in their current format on the website that the emails were easy for hackers to "harvest" and that she had contacted April Swenby about the matter and it would be addressed.

The Director of Education Report for the AELC was the next item that was reviewed. Mayor Wilkens noted that the annual meeting had been held in late January and had gone quite well. The bylaws had been reviewed and revised and one of the items changed was to allow for a larger Board of Directors. Currently the board is comprised of seven people and the amended bylaws would allow for up to eleven. A nominating committee had been formed to look at recruiting new board members.

Under the Fire Department Council member Wang had nothing to report except for the recent retirement of three members of the Department. Mark Berhow, Tim Olson, and Paul Reese had recently retired from the department. Mayor Wilkens then inquired about the fire equipment that was going back to the State and Council member Jensrud reported that there was snow in the way of getting the equipment out.

Under the Airport, Mayor Wilkens reported that Polk County had appointed two members to the Joint Airport Zoning Board. Now that all the appointments were filled, a meeting could be set up with Short Elliott Hendrickson and MnDOT Aeronautics to go over the draft zoning plan for the airport.

Personnel Committee had nothing to report.

Under Old Business, the first item to be addressed was a camera system for the Community Center and City Shop. Council member Jensrud had obtained a quote from Garden Valley Technologies for a number of cameras to be installed both inside and outside the Community Center and the City Shop. The quote was for \$9,300 and the system would operate similarly to the one installed at the new park building. Administrator Liden brought up some questions that she had referred to the City Attorney regarding privacy issues and records retention matters since the system would be set up in the Community Center. With both the clinic and library in the Community Center Liden said there could be privacy concerns especially given the ability to access the cameras live on a cell phone. Liden had also asked the City Attorney about who should be given ready access to the live stream option for the cameras.

Under New Business the first item to be addressed was the rink closing policy. Administrator Liden explained that the current policy was -15 for both temperature and wind chill and that Council member Jensrud would like to see the policy changed. Liden then referred to the information that she had received from other cities on their closing policies and noted that the most frequently occurring policy was for -10 temperature and -20 wind chill. Council member Jensrud then passed around a wind chill chart and also explained the policy of both the MN State High School League and OSHA. This was followed by a general discussion of the matter.

Council member Widrig then asked whether a skating rink committee should be established to deal with various matters at the rink. Mayor Wilkens asked if two Council members would be willing to meet and come up with a

recommendation on the closing policy. Council members Wise and Jensrud volunteered to meet and come up with a recommendation.

Administrator Liden then brought up the matter of hiring Council member Jensrud to work at the skating rink. Jensrud had put in many hours getting the ice ready at the rink and also maintaining the ice. Liden explained that rink employees are currently paid \$8.50 per hour and that Council should consider paying Jensrud more since he was operating equipment to clear the rink and maintain the ice. Council member Jensrud then stated that he was fine with \$8.50 per hour and that he would like to donate his pay back to the rink for equipment needs.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wise to approve the hiring of Council member Jensrud to be compensated for his time at the rink. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was carried. Council member Jensrud abstained.

Mayor Wilkens then read a letter from a resident that had been sent out to Council just prior to the meeting. In the letter she expressed concerns about the operation of the rink in light of the many hours that Reid Jensrud had been volunteering to keep the rink up and running. Mayor Wilkens ended by apologizing for not recognizing Jensrud by name during the ribbon cutting ceremony when the open house was held. Wilkens stated that he liked to avoid naming people who were instrumental in such matters since it was too difficult to remember everyone who had volunteered and he hated to leave anyone out by accident. Wilkens also stated that with the new rink location, that there were some things that may need to be ironed out prior to next season. A brief discussion was then held on the Olympia Ice machine that the City had purchased. Administrator Liden explained that the machine needed a thorough going over prior to using it and that the mechanic recommended by Olympia was booked out at least 30 days and would be getting in touch to make arrangements for working on the machine.

The next item up for discussion under New Business was whether the City could install a basketball hoop or two in the auditorium. Council member Wang explained that the school was really short on gym space for elementary basketball to get in any practice time and he felt it would be helpful for gym scheduling if the Community Center auditorium could be used for elementary practice. Wang explained further that he had measure the height of the lights in the auditorium and that they would be fine for teams to practice layups and possibly free throws but that longer shots and three-pointers would not be possible. Wang also volunteered to pay for and pick up a portable hoop to be used. Discussion was then held on the possibility of installing a hoop system that could be wall mounted and raised up out of the way for other events held in the auditorium. Council member Wise questioned whether or not the new flooring would hold up under basketballs being bounced. Administrator Liden said that she was sure the flooring was durable enough but that she would check with Vern Anderson to confirm that.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Jensrud to approve allowing basketball practice in the auditorium if Vern Anderson said the flooring would be okay. Council member Widrig seconded the motion and it was carried.

Council member Jensrud then made a motion at 9:15 p.m. to close the regular meeting to discuss a personnel matter. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and carried. The meeting was then closed until 9:37 p.m. when a motion was made by Council member Wang, seconded by Council member Wise to close the closed session and adjourn for the night. The motion was carried.