

Fertile City Council Minutes October 14, 2019

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, October 14, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Council members Todd Wise, Stanton Wang, and Reid Jensrud. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting, City Engineer Alex Ranz, David Bergin, and Dean Johnson.

In the absence of both Mayor Wilkens and Vice Mayor Widrig the meeting was called to order by Administrator Liden. The pledge of allegiance was recited by those present.

The first order of business was to determine who would run the meeting with the absence of both the Mayor and Vice Mayor. Council member Wang made a motion for Council member Wise to run the meeting. The motion was seconded by Jensrud and was carried.

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

The minutes of the September 9, 2019 meeting as revised prior to the meeting were approved on a motion by Council member Jensrud that was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

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

Under the Engineers Report Alex Ranz reported that Sellin had not been in town for almost a month but that they would be returning the next day to work on the punch list items. Ranz reported also that the paving of Garfield, Polk County 1 (Winger Road), Nelson Avenue, and Summit Avenue would begin the week of October 21st.

Ranz reported that it looked like the project would not be complete by the date that had been given with the last extension. Discussion was then held on whether the City would grant another extension or if penalties for non-completion would start to accrue on October 19th. The penalty for non-completion is \$2,600 per day. After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wang to set a new deadline of October 25th for completion of the project and if it were not complete by that date that the penalties would begin to accrue retroactively to October 19th. The motion was seconded by Council member Jensrud and was carried.

Pay application #7 was then up for discussion. Alex Ranz noted that most of the work completed under that application was the work that was done on Garfield and Polk County 1. The pay application for Sellin in the amount of \$216,194.11 was approved on a motion by Council member Jensrud that was seconded by Council member Wang and carried.

The application for the disbursement of funds from MN Public Facilities in the amount of \$188,394.41 was approved on a motion by Council member Jensrud that was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

Ranz also submitted three different campground designs for the RV Park that is being planned for the former skating rink location on Blaine Street. The designs were for review purposes only and would likely undergo several revisions based on Council input before the final design is approved in the spring.

Angie Leiting began the nursing home report by introducing David Bergin from the Fiducia Benefits Group. Leiting explained that with the rising cost of health insurance premiums through the Northwest Service Cooperative she was exploring other insurance options. Some other nursing homes in the area have their insurance through Fiducia so Leiting had contacted them to get some insurance quotes.

David Bergin began by handing out information folders to Council and reviewing information on historical premium and claims amounts. He explained that the reason the premiums have been so high is due to the high number of claims in the past. It also didn't help that there weren't very many employees in the pool, particularly younger, healthier employees. He said that it would help lower premiums if the claims went down and the number of employees participating was increased. One way to possibly increase that number would be to offer a Health Savings Plan as part of the benefit package at Fair Meadow. He ended by noting that he was looking for some alternative insurance carriers and hoped to have some premium options in the next week or two.

Under the nursing home, Administrator Leiting reported that the home began the month of September with 41 residents and ended with 42. They operated at 96.66% occupancy and also served 235 home delivered meals. The bank balance was almost \$300,000 which was the highest it has been in quite some time. For the month of September the nursing home showed a profit of almost \$60,000 and a small loss of \$3,000 was reported for the assisted living. For the fiscal year that ended on September 30, 2019 the home and assisted living combined for a profit of nearly \$250,000.

The contract with the State for the ECPN program was up for approval, and the resident rate had dropped from \$17 to \$11.24 due to lower expenses. Leiting noted, however, that even with the lower rate it was still very beneficial financially to participate in the program.

A motion was made by Council member Wang to approve participation in the ECPN Program for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2019. The motion was seconded by Council member Jensrud and was carried.

Leiting reported that they are in the process of applying for a VA contract which meant that local veterans would now be able to stay in Fertile. She ended her report by passing out a handout on the Quality Assurance Performance Improvement (QAPI) program. She explained that it was required that the nursing home's QAPI program be ongoing and address the full range of care and services that are provided to residents. Since the governing body is ultimately responsible for the home's QAPI program she would provide updates to Council quarterly for their review.

The Public Works report began with Dean Johnson letting Council know that he had a new snow blower that he would be willing to rent out to the city if needed for snow removal. Public Works Director Kevin Nephew reported that he was working with Downs Electric and Mid Valley Electric to get sign lighting installed for both the north and south Fertile signs. The lighting would be finished before winter.

Discussion was then held on the road grader that MnDOT would have available for sale in either late October or early November. The machine is a 2000 Caterpillar with 8,800 hours. The grader has front wheel assist which will eliminate the need to put chains on the tires for better traction on snow and ice. The unit comes with a right handed wing and a one way snow plow. The cost for the machine with the

attached equipment is \$75,000. After discussion of the matter, the purchase of the grader was approved on a motion by Council member Wang that was seconded by Council member Jensrud and carried.

Discussion was held on whether or not to look at purchasing a single axle truck. Kevin Nephew reported that the tandem axle truck corners tight enough so a single axle wouldn't be required. Council member Jensrud then asked if Kevin Nephew would be getting his CDL. Nephew stated that he would like to do that and Jensrud recommended getting that done before 2020 when the testing would be more difficult.

A motion was made by Council member Jensrud for City staff to get reimbursed for taking the CDL with air brakes testing and to allow staff to use the City truck for the testing. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The next item up for discussion was snow removal at the skating rink. Kevin Nephew had spoken with Aaron Swenby and he had said that he would give the City a good deal on what he would charge to clear the snow at the rink. Administrator Liden commented that she had also spoken with Aaron Swenby and that he had said the charge for clearing would be \$100 to \$200 per time. Depending on how many snowfalls there were, the cost would be too high to hire it done every time. This was followed by further discussion on other options.

Discussion was then held on bus loading options at the school. Superintendent Clarke had spoken with City staff and Council members about whether or not it would be possible to close off a portion of Second Street on the west side of the school two times per day to allow for safer bus loading and unloading. Clarke had explained that many parents pick their children up on Second Street and that it was dangerous when children darted out between the buses to get to their vehicles. Closing the street to through traffic would alleviate that problem. Council member Wise noted that they had a good set up at Mahnommen School for loading and unloading and that he would get pictures of the area to share with Council and Superintendent Clarke.

The City Administrator's Report was the next item up on the agenda. Administrator Lisa Liden reported that she had been working with School Superintendent Brian Clarke on the special election that would be held on November 5th. She had also worked with Kevin Nephew and MnDOT on the permits that were needed for the boring under Highway 32 for the sign lighting and street lights and also for moving the crossing just north of the golf course. She ended by noting that she had also held a couple of phone conferences and an in person meeting with FEMA to work on the paperwork for the reimbursement of expenses associated with the repair of flood damage to Summit Avenue this spring.

Under the Fire Department it was reported that there were only two calls during the month of September. One was for a natural gas leak and the other was for a medical assist.

Under the airport it was reported that the runway lighting project was nearly complete. The pay application for \$117,633 for NEO Electric was approved on a motion by Council member Jensrud that was seconded by Council member Wise and carried. Change Order #1 for the lighting project was approved on a motion by Council member Jensrud that was seconded by Council member Wang and carried.

The Personnel Committee had nothing to report.

The next item up for discussion was sponsor signs for the skating rink. Administrator Liden reported that area organizations had made donations for the rink and it would be nice to acknowledge those donations with signage at the rink. The signs would go on the street side of the dasher boards and the cost for

making a full size sign would be \$390 and a half size sign would be \$195. The cost didn't include installation. Discussion was held on installing a plaque board inside the building to recognize donors also.

Council member Wang made a motion that a plaque board would be put inside the building to acknowledge various levels of donations starting at \$100. For the dasher board signs, donors giving \$1,000 to \$2,499 would get a half size sign. People and businesses donating over \$2,500 would get a full size sign. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

Council member Wang made a motion for getting a full size sign for Premier Signs and another one for the Sandhill Car Wash in recognition of the many hours of work that Nick Aakhus had put in at the rink getting the dasher boards up and the dasher board glass installed. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

This was followed by a discussion on compensation for Nick Aakhus for his out of pocket costs that were incurred installing the dasher boards at the rink. Aakhus' had a paid employee helping with the installation and he also transported and used his telehandler. Administrator Liden would contact Nick Aakhus to get further information on his out of pocket costs.

Council member Jensrud then asked about payment for the hours that he had worked at the skating rink last winter. Administrator Liden said that he would need to submit the hours for payment. Jensrud said that he would email her the hours. This was followed by a discussion on payment for the hours and whether he wanted the amount donated to the skating rink or paid out to him.

Liquor licenses for 2020 were the next item up on the agenda. Council member Wang made a motion to approve licenses for The Other Place, Erickson's Smokehouse, Fertile Wine and Spirits, and Side Street Bar & Grill. The motion was seconded by Council member Jensrud and was carried.

Council member Jensrud then announced that he would like to resign from the City Council, Nature Center Board, and Fair Meadow Advisory Board effective immediately. Council member Wise thanked Jensrud for his service to the City.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Council member Wise at 8:32 p.m.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator