

Fertile City Council Minutes June 8, 2020

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, June 8, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Linda Widrig, Stanton Wang, and Todd Wise. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, and Public Works Director Kevin Nephew. Present by telephone were Fair Meadow Nursing Home Administrator Angie Leiting and City Engineer Alex Ranz. Also present in chambers were Matthew Massmann, Twylla Altepeter from the Fertile Journal, Liz Lisburg, Brian Gunufson, and Dustin Kalinoski. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wilkens at 6:30 p.m. The meeting began with those present reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Matthew Massmann was then sworn in as the newly appointed Council member to fill the seat vacated by Reid Jensrud.

Under agenda approval, Council member Wang asked to add opening the splash pad and RV campground fencing to the agenda. Administrator Liden said that both items could be addressed under existing items on the current agenda. The agenda was approved as presented on a motion by Council member Wang that was seconded by Council member Wise and carried.

There were no public comments.

The minutes of the May 11, 2020 regular meeting and the May 22, 2020 special meeting were approved as presented on a motion by Council member Wang that was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

City Administrator Lisa Liden next gave an overview of the financial statements and the out of the ordinary bills paid in May. Liden noted the checks made out to Brandner Printing for the senior banners, the check to Ulteig for the campground and water projects, and the check to Reardon for photocopies for the past year or more. Liden explained that she had contacted Reardon on a few occasions when she noted that they were not billing for the copies made each month. Reardon had finally caught the error and had sent a bill to catch up for the period that had been missed.

The Treasurer's Report and Bills were approved on a motion by Council member Widrig that was seconded by Council member Massmann. The motion was carried.

The next item up on the agenda was the City Engineer's report. Before calling Alex Ranz to join the meeting, Mayor Wilkens shared some background information on concerns of residents located along the alley on the north side of the campground. The new alley was staked out but it was not clear on whether the far north stakes represented the alley itself or just the right of way.

Mayor Wilkens then contacted Alex Ranz by phone and discussion was held on the alley relocation and the residents' concerns. It was decided that Ranz would meet with Mayor Wilkens and Council member Widrig the following morning to look at the staking for the alley.

Ranz then gave a project update. All the services were in for the campground and next Sellin would start on the grading and leveling of the site. Ranz also noted that the Blaine Street sewer was in bad shape so it was good that it was replaced. There was now better slope to where it hooks up on Jefferson so there shouldn't be any further problems with backing up.

Pay application #9 in the amount of \$174,426.15 was briefly reviewed. A motion was made by Council member Wang to approve payment on application #9. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

Council member Wise made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting and to open the Public Hearing on a setback variance request. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and the meeting was closed.

Mayor Wilkens started the hearing by asking Administrator Liden if there had been any issues or problems brought up regarding the variance request made by Liz Lisburg for a street side yard setback variance. Liden stated that no one had called to ask questions or raise concerns. Liz Lisburg explained that the plans had changed for the garage and that it would now be built directly north of their house rather than on the west side of the house. Administrator Liden asked

whether the new plans would fit within the setback requirements under City Code and Lisburg stated that it would. With the new location, it was determined that no set back variance was required.

The Public Hearing was closed and the regular meeting reconvened on a motion by Council member Wise that was seconded by Council member Wang and carried.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave her report to Council. She reported that the month of May began with 39 residents and ended with 41, operating at 95.77% capacity for the month. They had also served 271 home delivered meals. On the balance sheet, Leiting noted that the cash balance was up significantly due to receiving the Paycheck Protection Loan funds as well as a stimulus check for \$155,000 to cover lost revenue.

The profit and loss for the month of May showed a combined profit of just over \$540,000 with the nursing home reporting an income of over \$580,000 and the assisted living a loss of almost \$37,000. Leiting noted that the numbers were rather skewed since the PPP and stimulus funds had been entered as revenues for the month. She was waiting for guidance from Eide Bailly on whether the PPP amount should be recorded as a loan payable until the loan is forgiven. The year to date profit and loss showed a combined profit of over \$565,000 with the nursing home at a profit of almost \$680,000 and the assisted living showing a loss of over \$113,000.

Mayor Wilkens asked about the potential timeline for when the visiting restrictions at the nursing home would be lifted. Leiting replied that the lifting of the restrictions would be way behind the public restrictions being lifted or relaxed. She noted that the home had been in lock down for 12 weeks. Leiting explained that they were now doing outside visits so that residents could visit with their friends and family members. The visits are arranged by appointment and the visitors sit outside the gazebo area fence and the residents sit inside the fence at a distance of at least six feet.

A motion was made by Council member Wang and seconded by Council member Wise to close the meeting for a Public Hearing regarding a rear yard setback variance request for Dustin Kalinoski. Public Works Director Kevin Nephew noted that the garage needed to be shifted by at least five feet to the east to allow for snow removal in the alley. This was followed by a discussion of the alley right of way in that area and on a couple of poles that were limiting where the new garage could be located.

The Public Hearing was closed and the regular meeting reconvened on a motion by Council member Wise that was seconded by Council member Wang and carried.

Council member Wang made a motion to approve the rear yard setback variance requested by Dustin Kalinoski with the changes recommended by Kevin Nephew. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

Kevin Nephew, Public Works Director, gave his report to Council. He began by explaining that he had not gotten any other quotes yet on the asphalt work that had been discussed in May. Mayor Wilkens asked about the work on Old Mill Road and whether the township was willing to pay for the work. Nephew explained that he had attended the May meeting of Garfield Township and that they had agreed to budget \$3,000 to get the work done.

Mayor Wilkens inquired about the water salesman at the fire hall and Nephew stated that Brian Downs was working on it. As for the satellite dish site, Nephew reported that most of the trees that needed trimming were right on the property line with Duckstad. Mayor Wilkens stated that he would rather have the trees removed and asked Nephew to discuss the matter with Duckstad.

Discussion was then held on the open public works position. Administrator Liden stated that ads were being run in the Fertile Journal and the Crookston Times. Mayor Wilkens asked about conducting an exit interview with Dan Lene and it was decided that Mayor Wilkens and Council member Widrig who are both on the Personnel Committee would see about scheduling an exit interview.

The electrical bids that had been submitted for the RV campground were reviewed. After discussion of the bids, a motion was made by Council member Massmann to accept the bid for \$9,400 submitted by Mid Valley Electric. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

Council member Wise then asked about painting the street lights poles where they had been welded last fall. Wise volunteered to help with the painting.

A brief discussion was held on hiring for the temporary summer mowing position. Administrator Liden reported that only two people had applied for the position and that Ivan Nephew, who was one of the applicants, was currently doing the mowing since he had finished out the season last year. A motion was made by Council member Wise, seconded by Council member Wang to approve hiring Ivan Nephew for the summer maintenance position. The motion was carried.

Kevin Nephew reported that Falls Electric would be installing streetlight poles in town. They would put up the one located on the corner by the school and the two on the south end of town by the golf course.

Administrator Liden gave her report. In addition to the usual monthly report filings, Liden was continuing work on the 2019 audit and had worked with MN Public Facilities and MN Rural Water on the loans for the water and campground projects. She noted that she had processed all the water bill payments for the month of May since Terry Baumgartner was working from home. Going forward, however, Terry would either be coming in after hours to process water bill payments or bringing them home to enter as needed.

Mayor Wilkens reported that he had spoken with Gary Reitmeier about his interest in purchasing a small section of the City lot located behind the hardware store. Wilkens asked Nephew if that would cause any issues with lot maintenance or snow removal. After looking at a map of the area, Nephew said that he didn't foresee any issues with selling part of the lot to Reitmeier.

Under the Learning Center, Mayor Wilkens reported that there were still issues with 4-wheelers being driven on Nature Center trails and that the Executive Committee would be meeting on Thursday to discuss better signage at trail heads.

Mayor Wilkens then inquired about increasing the funding for the Learning Center. For quite some time, the City has provided \$5,000 a year in cash for the Learning Center and Wilkens stated that he would like to see that amount eventually increased to \$10,000 per year to help defray the costs of running education programming. For the current year, he would like to see an increase in funding to \$7,500.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wise to increase the 2020 funding to the Learning Center to \$7,500. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was carried.

Under the Fire Department, Council member Wang reported that they had responded to eight calls during the month of May. The calls were for three grass fires, one of which was a mutual aid call; two car accidents; a tree down at the football field; a fire at the city compost site; and a corn field fire.

For the airport Dan Triller's report was reviewed. The lighting project was completed and the plans were finalized for the runway rehabilitation. Bids for the runway work would be advertised and the bid opening would take place on July 8th so they could be reviewed and tabulated to present to Council at the July 13th meeting. Mayor Wilkens noted that surveyors would be coming to mark the trees that are height obstructions and need to be either trimmed or removed.

Kevin Nephew asked if there were still plans for an arrival departure building at the airport. Mayor Wilkens stated that plans for that were a bit further out in the future. Wilkens noted that he had also contacted other airports in the area for information on their hangars and whether they were privately owned or City owned. For the airports with private hangars Wilkens was also getting information on leases that other cities use.

The Personnel Department had nothing to report.

Under Old Business the next item up for discussion was City facility closures due to COVID-19. Council member Wang asked about opening the splash park since people were inquiring about it. Administrator Liden asked that the City Offices remain closed to the public since 95% of the visitors to the office were there to drop off water bill payments and there was a drop box located on the outside of the door for that purpose. Other visitors who needed assistance with other matters such as building permits, notarizing, faxing, or copying can be let into the office as needed. As for building rental, Liden felt that if indoor gatherings could only be held for 10 or fewer people that Community Center rentals should still be discontinued and the situation reassessed at the July meeting.

After discussion on the matter, a motion was made by Council member Massmann to open the splash park and for the City Office and community center to continue being closed to the public. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

The next item to be addressed was the Community Club request to hold the weekly Farmer's Market in JD Mason Park. Due to COVID 19 requirements, the market's usual space between Encore and the hardware store wasn't large enough to accommodate the vendors with social distancing guidelines.

A motion was made by Council member Wang to approve the Farmer's Market using JD Mason Park for the summer. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

Resolution #6-1-20, Resolution Authorizing the Issuance, Sale and Delivery of a \$213,000 General Obligation Water Revenue Note was the next item to be addressed. After a brief review of the resolution, a motion was made by Council member Wang to approve Resolution #6-1-20. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The appointment of election judges for the primary and general elections in 2020 was the final agenda item to be addressed. Administrator Liden explained that Terry Baumgartner no longer wanted to serve as an election judge, so a new head judge needed to be appointed. Liden had contacted Jessica Ebert about filling that role since she had learned that Ebert has served as an election judge for many years in another county and had indicated an interest in serving as a judge for Fertile since she now lived in town. Liden recommended an hourly raise of 50 cents to \$14.50 per hour plus \$1 an hour rate for hazard pay due to the current COVID situation. She also recommended that the head judge be paid an additional dollar per hour for the increased duties and responsibilities.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wise to approve the appointments of Jessica Ebert as head judge, Patty Benbo, Ginny Strem, Senora Pederson, and Jackie Erickson as election judges, and Kim Carlson and Rhonda Bennefeld as Healthcare Facility Judges and to approve the pay levels as requested by Administrator Liden. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

A brief discussion was then held on the process for filling the open public works position. Administrator Liden stated that she would like Public Works Director Kevin Nephew fully involved in the process this time around. She also explained that City Code states that the Administrator advertises open positions, reviews applicants, and performs interviews. The Administrator then comes to Council with her recommendation on filling the position and Council is responsible for approval of the candidate's hiring. Council member Massmann stated that if that is the process outlined in the City Code that it should be followed. Council agreed so Administrator Liden said that she and Kevin Nephew would review the applications and take care of the interviews so that a name could be brought to Council at the July 13th meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m. on a motion by Council member Wang.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator