

Fertile City Council Minutes April 12, 2021

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, April 12, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Stanton Wang and Matthew Massmann. Council member Todd Wise attended by phone. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting, City Engineer Alex Ranz, and Twylla Altepeter from the Fertile Journal.

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

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

There were no public comments.

The minutes of the March 8, 2021 minutes were reviewed and approved on a motion by Council member Wang that was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

City Administrator Lisa Liden gave the Treasurer's Report. Liden went over the out of the ordinary deposits and checks for the month of March noting the checks that had been written for workmen's compensation insurance and the City's property and liability insurance. Liden also noted the checks written to Short Elliot Hendrickson for engineer services and to Northland Trust Services to pay off the interim loan for the 2019 water project. The budget to actual reports were briefly reviewed.

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

Dan Triller's report that had been submitted in writing was briefly reviewed by Administrator Liden.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave her report to Council. She reported that the month of March began with 39 residents and ended with 38, operating at 89.09% capacity for the month. Leiting noted that there were currently four open beds in the nursing home. They had also served 200 home delivered meals. The profit and loss for the month of March showed a loss of just over \$6,600 with both the nursing home and assisted living reporting losses. The combined year-to-date profit and loss showed an income of just over \$370,000 with the nursing home showing a profit of \$381,500 and the assisted living a loss of just under \$11,000. Leiting noted that there would be three payrolls in the month of April. In reviewing the budget to actual report Leiting noted that the target number was 50% and that total expenses were slightly over the target at 53.91% but that revenues were also higher than the target at 60.33%.

For the Covid report Leiting reported that the nursing home was currently in outbreak mode again after one resident and three staff had tested positive. Of those that tested positive, the resident and one staff member had been vaccinated. Since those original results, one more staff had also tested positive. The nursing home, however, was still open to visitors. Testing would be conducted weekly until there were two consecutive weeks with no positives. Council member Massmann commented that it was a sticky situation with positive tests after vaccination and that the CDC guidelines had not yet been updated to address that situation.

Leiting went on to report that the Personnel Committee had met to address the matter of employee retention and recruitment. Many nursing homes in the area were facing staff shortages that were impacting operations and while Fair Meadow was currently not having staffing issues Leiting wanted to ensure that it did not become a problem. Leiting had done a survey of all staff and asked what other benefits or perks they would like to receive to increase their job satisfaction. As a result of the survey, a list of the top five requests had been compiled and reviewed by the Personnel Committee to see which ones were feasible to offer to staff.

The Personnel Committee recommended three changes to be made including adding an employee's birthday as a paid holiday, adding a level four to the earning of vacation hours, and a monthly budget of \$500 for staff appreciation. After a brief discussion of the added incentives, a motion was made by Council member Massmann to approve the personnel policy changes as recommended by the Personnel Committee. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

Leiting then reported on capital purchases that were going to be made with donations from the Fair Meadow Foundation. Those purchases included a concrete slab and wheelchair swing, a wheelchair bicycle, computers, and new beds.

The next nursing home matter to be addressed was the purchase of two washing machines from Minnesota Chemical Company for about \$30,000 total. Both current machines were about 26 years old so parts were no longer available to repair them. Both machines were currently leaking oil and one of them had started leaking oil into the chamber getting oil on all the clothing.

Council member Massmann asked if Leiting had ever checked into outsourcing the laundry. He commented that many of the area hospitals and clinics outsource their laundry needs since it was more cost effective than doing it in-house. Leiting replied that she hadn't done that but that she could look into what was available in the area.

A motion was made by Council member Massmann to approve the purchase of the new washing machines pending a cost analysis of outsourcing the laundry. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

For the Fire Department, Council member Wang reported there had been just one call and that was a for an enormous grass fire that involved ten different departments and the Department of Natural Resources assisting with the fire.

As it was 7 p.m. and there was a Public Hearing on a Code Amendment, Council member Massmann made a motion to close the regular meeting for the Public Hearing. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

The Public Hearing was opened by Mayor Wilkens and Administrator Liden explained the purpose behind the Code amendment which was to allow for the issuance of a Conditional Use Permit for the construction of an accessory structure more than one year in advance of the principal structure in a residential zone. Administrator Liden noted that in 13 years there had only been three inquiries about building a garage more than one year before the building of a house in a residential zone, but that it would be best to have the Code amendment to allow for that in those rare instances.

There were no concerns expressed about the Code amendment, so the Public Hearing was closed and the regular meeting reconvened.

A motion was made by Council member Wang to pass Ordinance #2021-1 An Ordinance Amending Fertile Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 152A, Section III By Allowing Accessory Structures Prior To Construction of a Principal Structure By Conditional Use. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

The next item up on the agenda was the Public Works Report. Mayor Dan Wilkens began by announcing that he would like to offer his congratulations and appreciation to Public Works Director Kevin Nephew. As of April 1st, Nephew had been with the City for 30 years. Mayor Wilkens presented Nephew with a plaque and a gift certificate to Erickson's Smokehouse. Twylla Altepeter from the Fertile Journal took pictures of Wilkens and Nephew as well as Jessie and Ivan Nephew who attended the meeting.

Kevin Nephew gave the Public Works report. He explained about survey work that would be needed at Pleasant Hill Cemetery to determine which plots were usable on the east side and to get markers in the ground to make it easier in the future to mark burial sites. Administrator Liden said that there would also be survey work required at the Learning Center since they were working with property owners on acquiring portions of some of the bordering properties where hiking trails were currently located on private property. Liden thought it would be less expensive for the survey work if it could all be done at once.

Nephew went on to report that he possibly had a volunteer lined up with equipment to do some further leveling work at the Learning Center campground. Leveling in the area of the Farmer's Market in JD Mason Park was also discussed.

The City Engineer report was the next item on the agenda. City Engineer Alex Ranz distributed his draft Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Council to review. He explained that he had met with Kevin Nephew and Administrator Liden to discuss future needs of the City regarding water, sewer, and streets. Based on that meeting and later discussions with Kevin Nephew he had put together a CIP to provide guidance on planning for the future. He stressed that the plan was just a draft and that Council could add or take off projects or change how they were prioritized on the list. He added that a CIP was a good tool to utilize for future years' budgeting and provided more direction to Council on what projects would need to be addressed in the short and long term.

Discussion was held on the draft CIP including the pros and cons of some of the projects that were on the list. Council member Massmann expressed some concern about more water or sewer projects in the short term given the fact that water bills had just been increased significantly to cover the bond costs related to the water projects that were done in 2019 and 2020. Administrator Liden noted that the City would be eligible for more grant funding on water projects in the near future since the City had recently increased the debt load on the water fund. Heavier debt was advantageous when the State was determining how grant funds were distributed on Clean Water projects. Alex Ranz said he would talk to MN Public Facilities to determine how much potential grant funding could be received on water projects versus taking on more debt due to the City's increased debt load.

Administrator Liden gave the Administrator's report. Liden updated Council on her activities since the last Council meeting which included participation in several meetings including the Fair Meadow Personnel Committee, Riverland Association, and the Community Club. She had also met with Ben Sather regarding his preliminary subdivision plan, assisted with several building permit requests, and prepared the Public Hearing notice for the zoning amendment.

For the Learning Center, Mayor Wilkens reported that Wayne Goeken had been hired as Interim Executive Director in the absence of an Education Director due to the resignation of Brent Silvis. The other item addressed for the Learning Center was new signage that the AELC Board would like the City

to purchase and put up. Unauthorized use of motorized vehicles on hiking trails was a continuing problem and the AELC Board requested large signs to be put up on the entry roads to the Learning Center informing visitors that motor vehicles are prohibited on the trails and smaller signs in several perimeter areas where ATVs were entering the trail system. The Board was also interested in putting up informational signs on Summit Avenue and would like Council permission to put those up.

After a brief discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wise to approve the sign requests made by the AELC Board. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

Annual approval of Fire Department gaming for the three liquor establishments in town was the next agenda item that was addressed. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Council member Massmann to approve Fire Department gaming for The Other Place, Erickson's Smokehouse, and Side Street Bar & Grill. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The adoption of a golf cart ordinance was the final agenda item to be addressed. Administrator Liden reminded Council that the matter had been previously discussed at the September 11, 2020 meeting and tabled until late winter or early spring. Liden had done some preliminary work on researching the ordinances of other cities and she asked for the matter to be put on the May agenda after further research and consulting with the City Attorney.

Council member Wang reported that he had looked into the ordinance that was currently in place in Crookston and he liked their requirement which included golf carts needing turn signals, lights, a rear-view mirror and a horn. Council member Massmann commented that he didn't want the permit to be too restrictive and require people to spend a lot of money to bring their carts into compliance with requirements like turn signals.

After further discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Massmann, and seconded by Council member Wang to hold a special meeting on Monday, April 19th, to review sample ordinances and then hold a public information session at the May 10th meeting to get public input on the ordinance. The motion was carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 on a motion by Council member Massmann.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator