

Fertile City Council Minutes

August 9, 2021

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, August 9, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Stanton Wang and Todd Wise. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Public Works employee Chris Zimmer, 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 6:32 p.m. and began with those present reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

There were no public comments.

The minutes of the July 12, 2021 regular meeting and the July 20, 2021 special meeting were approved on a motion by Council member Wang, that was seconded by Council member Wise 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 July. Liden noted the out of the ordinary checks written to Eide Bailly for the audit, the check to Agassiz Asphalt for the final payment on the runway project, and checks written to Bond Trust Services and Northland Trust Services for bond and interest payments on the nursing home renovation bonds, the TIF bonds and the water project loans. Liden also briefly went over the income and expense totals on the budget to actual reports for each fund and noted that the numbers were the six-month totals.

The Treasurer's Report and Bills was approved on a motion by Council member Wise, seconded by Council member Wang and carried.

Under the airport, the written report submitted by Airport Engineer Dan Triller was briefly reviewed and Administrator Liden noted that the apron rehabilitation project was underway.

City Engineer Alex Ranz gave his report to Council and began with an update on the sidewalk issue on the north side of the school. The City had submitted a letter to the contractor, Sellin Brothers, stating that the City would like to keep \$25,000 of the retainage funds to cover repair of the sidewalk and for the poor aesthetics of the pop outs. Sellin had countered that the sidewalk met the specifications and that they were willing to let the city keep only \$5,000 of the retainage. After discussion of the matter, Mayor Wilkens asked Ranz if Sellin would be willing to meet to discuss the matter in person and to see if there was some flexibility on the \$5,000 amount. Ranz felt that Joel Sellin may be willing to meet and that he would contact them to set up a meeting.

Ranz then reported on the financial feasibility of potential water projects. He had met with Public Works Director Kevin Nephew and they had discussed some areas in town where water lines could be replaced and other potential looping areas. Ranz also explained that replacement of all the water meters in town had been discussed. Ranz went on to explain that he had worked with Minnesota Public Facilities and they had run some numbers to see where the city would sit as far as grant funding for projects. Unfortunately, the average household income for the City had gone up from 2019 so that the City would no longer be eligible for grant funds. Ranz would continue to stay in touch with Public Facilities to see if there were any changes made to the financial guidelines for funding.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave her report to Council. She reported for the month of July that they started the month with 37 residents and ended the month with 39, operating at 87.32% capacity for the month. They had also served 152 home delivered meals.

The profit and loss for the month of July showed combined income of over \$105,000 with the nursing home showing income of over \$101,000 and the assisted living reporting income of just over \$3,000. The combined year-to-date profit and loss showed an income of over \$510,000 with the nursing home showing a profit of over \$560,000 and the assisted living a loss of just over \$50,000. For the budget to actual report, it was noted that the target number was 83% and that income was at 94% and expenses were at 85% for the nursing home. Leiting noted that nursing salaries and nursing care amounts were both below budget. Leiting also reported on the total debt that was owed to the city for past loans and noted that it was continuing to go down each month as payments were made.

Leiting reported that the State had been in the previous week and that the home had received a few minor deficiencies which were all low level. Leiting reported that she had reached out to a few staffing agencies but that no temporary staff was available to fill the open nursing positions. She had also reached out to the Dept. of Health to see if they could help, but they only help with staffing when there is a shortage of staff due to Covid.

Discussion was held on the meeting that was scheduled for August 24th for the Personnel and Budget Committees. Leiting expressed that the meeting needed to happen sooner than that. The staffing was in crisis situation and she was worried that even more staff would be leaving to accept positions at facilities that were offering higher pay and sign on bonuses. Mayor Wilkens asked Administrator Liden to email the committee members to see if a meeting could be held either later in the week or the following week. Leiting ended by noting that they were currently looking to hire "CNA partners" who would be able to assist with bed making and other CNA non-nursing duties to help until more licensed staff could be hired.

Kevin Nephew, Public Works Supervisor, was next to give his report to Council. Chris Zimmel from Public Works was also present so he began by reporting on the broken dasher boards at the skating rink. There were several boards that were shattered from being hit by hockey pucks and several more that were cracked and would likely break further this winter. Zimmel had obtained cost information on replacement options for the boards and had provided Administrator Liden a list showing the options and costs for each. One option was to replace just the broken ones with the ½" poly that the rink is currently constructed of. Zimmel had talked to Becker Arena Products and they had stated, however, that the poly wasn't a good solution for outdoor rinks that are subject to extreme temperature changes.

Another option was to replace all of the boards with ¼" fiberglass which was more suitable to extreme Minnesota temperatures. A final option would be to replace all of the boards with ½" treated plywood. Council member Wang commented that he couldn't see just replacing the broken ones with poly when there were so many others that were cracked. Wang also felt it would be better to just replace them all with fiberglass since that was better suited to Minnesota's low temperatures.

After further discussion of the matter a motion was made by Council member Wang to replace all of the dasher boards with the ¼" fiberglass pending positive reports from other outdoor rinks that had the fiberglass boards. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The next item up for discussion was the rental of a tractor. Chris Zimmel had talked to Valley Plains Equipment and they had provided a letter offering the rental of a tractor and loader for \$18 per hour. The tractor and loader would be switched out every eight to ten months and the city would be responsible for oil changes and any other wear and tear items not covered under warranty. Zimmel noted that a tractor wouldn't be available until this fall at the earliest. Discussion was then held on potentially selling the Case tractor and the earliest that could be done. Discussion was also held on the purchase of a new snow blower. Kevin Nephew noted that Verdell Olson currently had a snow blower for sale for \$3,500.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wang to purchase the snow blower that Verdell Olson had for sale and to enter into the rental agreement with Valley Plains Equipment for the rental of a tractor and loader. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

For the Learning Center Mayor Wilkens reported that the city had received an \$18,000 equipment grant for maintaining cross country ski trails. No funds from the grant could be used until the fall.

For the fire department, Council member Wang reported that the department had met with a representative from Fish and Wildlife to discuss upcoming issues due the drought. The department had responded to six fires. There was a grass fire, a brush and pit fire, a garbage fire, and shop and grass fire, a ditch fire, and a car fire. The had also responded to a car rollover, an incident on highway 102 involving an overdose, and a medical assist.

Under the City Personnel Committee Administrator Liden reported that the committee would need to meet before September's Council meeting to review the wage scale information provided by Baker Tilly to determine employee compensation under the 2022 budget.

Under new business the first item up for discussion was additional signage on the north and south end of town. Administrator Liden explained that many cities put up signs when their local sports teams win state championships and that several people had inquired whether the city would put up signs for the team and individual golf champions in 2021. Liden stated that she would work with Nick Aakhus of Premier Signs and that the signs could go under the city welcome signs on the north and south end of town. Liden also noted that there had also been discussion a couple of years ago about getting a smaller welcome sign put up on County Highway 1 east of town.

A motion was made by Council member Wang to order the championship signs for the north and south entry signs. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The next item on the agenda was approval of a permit for FFA for a 5K to be held on Saturday, August 14th. A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve the 5K permit. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

Office hours was the next item to be discussed. Administrator Liden explained that the office was currently open from 8 to 5 each day and was only closed for lunch on rare occasions. Quite often she was in the office until after 5 dealing with last minute customers or emails and Liden felt closing at 4:30 like many other government offices would allow her time to wrap up pending items before leaving.

A motion was made by Council member Wang to change the office hours to 8 to 4:30. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and carried.

The final item on the agenda was the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that were available to the city. Liden explained that she had included materials in the packets explaining what the funding could be spent on and that the city had plenty of time to determine how to spend the funds. With the Covid situation evolving again due to the Delta variant, Liden felt it would be best to wait to decide where the funds were most needed. The only action required currently was for Council to approve requesting the funds.

After a brief discussion a motion was made by Council member Wise to request the disbursement of the ARPA funds. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and carried.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m. on a motion by Council member Wang.