

Fertile City Council Minutes December 13, 2021

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting Monday, December 13, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were Mayor Daniel Wilkens, Council members Mary Kiefert, Matthew Massman, Stanton Wang. Council member Todd Wise and City Administrator Lisa Liden were absent. Also present were City Billing Clerk Stacy Erickson, Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Craig Engelstad to represent the AELC, 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.

Mayor Wilkens called for any additions or corrections to the agenda. Hearing none, Council member Massmann motioned to approve the agenda and Council member Kiefert seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The minutes of the November 8, 2021 meeting were reviewed and Council Member Stanton Wang motioned to approve with a correction on page 2, third line from the bottom, changing the last word from “manner” to “matter”. The corrected record should read: “Liden had also had to testify in a criminal *matter* regarding a resident who had made threats against the City and had worked with the City attorney on the termination of a road maintenance agreement.” Massmann seconded that motion. Motion carried.

The Treasurer’s Report was reviewed briefly by all in Administrator Liden’s absence. Noting that there were no significant transactions or changes, Council member Massmann motioned to approve and Council member Kiefert seconded the motion.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave her report for Fair Meadow Nursing Home. The month of November began with 37 residents and ended with 41. They were at 91.58% capacity. They served 148 home delivered meals.

Leiting reported that there was one payroll error where a call pay was missed in the Assisted Living and that has been corrected. She reported that her staff are loving the Ability payroll system. It was used as a trial on the previous pay period and was expected to go live by January 1, 2022. The software providers had staffing challenges, so the nursing home training had been rescheduled and it was not yet used to full capacity.

As of the time of the meeting, the vaccine mandate had been put on hold, but the nursing home was moving forward as if it would be in effect to prevent potential problems further down the line.

The profit and loss for the month was reviewed, Leiting explained that the numbers were still skewed in part by the previous month having 3 payroll periods. The Assisted living had a profit of \$9,225.73 and the Nursing Home had a loss of \$21,437.50. There was one empty unit in the assisted living. The budget to actual was reported at 17% for the assisted living and 18% for the nursing home, the target was 17%.

Leiting reported that January 4th the Nursing Home would receive the funding from DHS totaling \$105,000 for the use of retainage or recruitment of staff. The use could be spread over three months. Council member Kiefert asked what expenses were being considered for these funds. Leiting explained that the most likely plan at that time was to provide a \$200 bonus per employee, per pay check for six pay checks. She explained that these funds were based on Medicaid days from 2020.

Council member Massmann asked about scheduling and the Ability program. He noted that he had reports from high school staff that they had been having some challenges. Leiting acknowledged those challenges and explained that there were two known issues. One was that a temporary staff person was covering a scheduling position due to a medical leave. Leiting also noted that eight people had called in on December 10, 2021 for a variety of reasons and even under the best circumstances, that is a mess to fill. That day, many staff attempted to help fill the shifts and there was some confusion as there was an urgency to get every shift covered. All agreed that there seemed to be a good plan in place and that these problems wouldn't likely continue to be a problem.

Public Works Director Kevin Nephew gave the public works report. He reported that vehicles left parked on the roads had been a problem for snow removal already. He noted specifically that Washington is the most notable and that a boat had been parked along the road for quite some time. He also noted that there was a white van behind the drug store and there was a white vehicle on the south end of town that several in the room knew. Mayor Wilkens said to send notices and to tow them if appropriate so that the roads could be properly cleared.

Council member Massmann asked about the water main that had been plowed through by Garden Valley. Kevin reported that it wasn't a main but that it was fixed. Nephew reported that the skating rink had been flooded four times and still needed two or three more floods before it would be ready for the season. Christmas vacation week was the goal for being ready. He reported that eight panels had been replaced on the rink and that more had been broken since that time. He estimated that there were eight or so spare panels left. The replacement of the eight was done and had taken a couple of days.

Mayor Wilkens and Kevin Nephew had a brief discussion about using a rust sealant on the fenders of the payloader and the road grader. Nephew requested approval for the back room of the shop to be insulated. The council all said to just get it done.

Mayor Wilkens asked for clarification of the snow removal policy for the mounds at the ends driveways that are caused by clearing streets. Nephew explained that the priorities are the streets, sidewalks, alleys, then the Community Center and then the driveways that need it. He estimated that as much as 90% of the driveways are done before the maintenance crew can get back to them. Some do not want it done and the number of those needing it varies. He noted that the pick up works better for that type of work than the tractor does. He also noted that the snowblower on the tractor is their best tool for snow removal. Council thanked him for his report.

The City Administrator report was not formally presented as Liden was absent. Stacy Erickson noted that Liden had prepared the memos attached in the packets and there hadn't been any noteworthy activities or issues that the council needed to address at that time that hadn't already been brought to their attention.

Agassiz Environmental Learning Center was represented by Craig Engelstad. Mayor Wilkens gave an overview of the partnership of the City and the AELC so that all present were able to understand the relationship between the two entities. He gave the background that the AELC was founded for the education and preservation aspects of nature and that the city has an obligation to assist with recreational activities in the community. He explained that the City pays \$10,000 per year to support the AELC's mission and that there is an effort to get the county to match.

Wilkens explained further that there is a significant volunteer shortage in our area and that it is significantly impacting the operations of the center and the ability to provide recreational services. He went on to explain that the skating rink in town is staffed and that the City fully supports that activity as it helps the community as a whole. Mayor Wilkens proposed that the City consider staffing the Nature Center up to 12 hours on the weekends to allow for snowshoe and ski rentals and site hosting. Council member Massmann asked about combining the skis and snowshoes with the skating rentals. Craig Engelstad, Stacy Erickson, and Mayor Wilkens explained that was extremely challenging due to quantity of equipment, the lack of space for it at the skating rink and the need for site hosting.

Council member Massmann motioned to open the job at the Learning Center for 12 hours a weekend, weather permitting. Council member Wang seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Engelstad asked about converting to programmable thermostats at the Nature Center to help save on heating costs since the current thermostats seem to be no longer working correctly. He also suggested that the Council consider converting the lighting in the building to LED lights. He asked about the water softener service and how often it has been serviced. No one present at the meeting knew for sure. Engelstad invited the Council to the AELC for a visit for coffee and cookies and a brief tour. Council agreed to investigate the water softener and thermostats.

Engelstad brought up the rug inside the front door and that it was too small for when groups come in the door. The floor gets covered with snow and gets wet and creates more of a mess that is slippery and a safety concern as well as the potential for damage to the floor.

The Fire Department report was given by Council member Wang. There had been one fire call, one medical assist, and one carbon monoxide alarm call. The department is working on grants from the DNR and they are working with Norman county for better 911 dispatching. He reported that there was an upcoming EMR refresher course. Wang reported that election of officers had been held and that Chief Wolfe Clark had chosen not to run. Jason Haas, former assistant chief, was elected as the new Chief. Tim Oistad was elected as the assistant chief. First training captain, Todd Dufault ran unopposed. First engineer captain, Eli Clark ran unopposed.

The Council went on to discuss the Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new City Engineer. Council member Massmann asked that the Council have Liden explore websites for the listing and wondered about legal requirements for publishing in various media venues.

Council member Massmann motioned to post the RFP as legally required. Council member Wang seconded the motion and the motion carried.

The tobacco licenses were brought forward for approval. There were currently four establishments that had licenses including Aaron's Grocery, JT's Station, The Other Place, and Northdale Oil. Council

member Massmann motioned to approve the licenses. Council member Kiefert seconded the motion and the motion carried.

The next item up for consideration was a county land sale. A small parcel of tax forfeited land was due to be sold to the adjoining property owner and as a formality, Council had to approve the sale. Council member Wang made a motion to approve and Council member Massmann seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The budget and mill levy were presented. Council member Kiefert made a motion to approve the budget as presented. Council member Wang seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Council member Massmann made a motion to approve Resolution #12-1-21, the final tax levy. Council member Kiefert seconded the motion and the motion was carried.

The official polling place designation is to be assigned each December for any elections the following year. Resolution #12-2-21 states that the auditorium of the Duane Knutson Community Center be designated as the official polling place for the City of Fertile. Council member Kiefert made a motion to accept the resolution, seconded by Council member Wang. Motion carried.

The wage scale was presented for final approval. Council member Massmann motioned to accept the pay scale recommended by Baker Tilly and move employees to their respective wage steps on January 1, 2022. Council member Kiefert seconded the motion. The motion was carried with Council member Wang abstaining.

There were no announcements.

There being no further business, Council member Massmann motioned to adjourn at 7:40 pm.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator