

Fertile City Council Minutes March 8, 2021

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, March 8, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Stanton Wang, Matthew Massmann, and Todd Wise. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Mark and Becky Sandness, 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 February 8, 2021 minutes were up for discussion. Mayor Wilkens asked about adding further information to the end of paragraph eight on page two where Kevin Nephew asked about whether replacing the footbridge at the Learning Center was an option under the trails grant program. Wilkens wanted to add language indicating that the bridge option wasn't feasible under the grant program due to the high cost. The minutes were approved as amended 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 February noting the checks that had been written for the fire department and the deposit of the funds from the fire department for those bills. Liden also noted the check to the Community Club for the donation of the Mayor's salary as well as the check to MN Public Facilities which was for the payment of bond interest. Liden pointed out the cash balance on the balance sheet and reported that the balance would drop significantly by the end of March due to repayment of the \$140,000 interim water project loan as well as the premiums for the City's property and liability insurance and workmen's compensation insurance. 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 Wise and carried.

The airport was next on the agenda and the only item to address was the request for Council to approve advertising for bids on the apron and taxiway rehabilitation, apron expansion and new taxi lanes project that was slated for State funding after July 1st. Administrator Liden explained that Short Elliott Hendrickson was currently working on the design for the project and that SEH would like to open the project for bids in early April with an April 29th bid opening.

A motion was made by Council member Wang to approve advertising for bids on the project. Council member Wise seconded the motion and it was carried.

There was no City Engineer report given but Administrator Liden noted that Alex Ranz had met with both her and Kevin Nephew to go over information for preparing the Capital Improvement Plan for the City. Council member Massmann then asked about the discussion the previous month about the high costs for the proposed paving of Christian Street by the Sports Complex. Mayor Wilkens explained that the State grant funding was only available for the construction of 10 ton roads, so that really drove up the cost of the project including the engineer fees. Due to the high cost of the project, it was no longer feasible to pursue.

Kevin Nephew was absent so there was no Public Works Director's report. In Kevin Nephew's absence Mayor Wilkens reported that he, Kevin Nephew and Jeremiah Gudvangen had gone to Larimore to look at the payloader that would be available for sale this spring. Wilkens reported that the machine was in good shape and that it had

about 7,000 hours on it. He noted, however, that the Larimore public works department frequently pulled the payloader out of the shop and left it running, so the 7,000 hours on the machine were not all working hours. Once Larimore got their new payloader delivered John Deere would bring the machine in to their shop and go over it thoroughly. They would replace the front engine seal since that was leaking and they would also rotate the tires from front to back. Wilkens noted that the payloader included a bucket and forks. John Deere had been asking \$77,000 for the payloader but Mayor Wilkens had talked the sales representative down to \$75,000. Since Council had already approved spending up to \$125,000 on a loader at any earlier meeting, there was no action needed to approve the purchase when the payloader became available.

City Administrator Lisa Liden gave her report to Council which detailed the meetings she had participated in as well as the completion of further annual reports. Liden also noted that she had prepared the database and public hearing mailing for the Mark Sandness variance hearing. The Administrator's Report was approved on a motion by Council member Massmann that was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

For the Learning Center Mayor Wilkens reported that Brent Silvis had resigned as Education Director so the Learning Center Board would need to start the search process for someone to fill the position.

For the Fire Department, Council member Wang reported that the department had responded to four calls. One was to check for hot spots in a garage after a car fire, a car accident in town, a mutual aid call with the Mentor Department and a car accident that they got called back from. Wang reported also that new LED lights had been installed on the trucks and that 12 people had completed the Fire Fighter 1 training and would be moving on to Fire Fighter 2 training.

The open City Council seat was briefly discussed and Mayor Wilkens noted that there were a couple of people that were possibly interested in serving.

Under Old Business, Administrator Liden noted that a Public Hearing would be held at the April Council meeting to amend the City's Zoning Code to allow for a conditional use permit for the construction of an accessory structure more than one year prior to the construction of a residence. Liden noted that the City Attorney had just finished drafting the language of the necessary amendment and that she would review it with the attorney prior to the April meeting in case any changes were necessary.

The first item under new business were several items relating to the Car Show which was scheduled to be held on June 12th. Administrator Liden reported that the Car Show had been canceled in 2020 due to Covid but that the Car Show Committee felt it could be put on safely this year with a few small changes made to the events and activities. The four items that were up for approval were the same that Council had to approve each year for the Car Show. Those four items were City sponsorship of the event with a \$500 donation to defray costs, the closing of three City streets, the use of the City lot behind Thrifty White and the use of Cannon Park.

After a brief discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wang to approve the items requested by the Car Show Committee. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The next item under new business was offering an incentive for residents to sign up to receive their monthly water bill by email. Administrator Liden explained that over 400 bills are printed and mailed each month and that each bill costs 35 cents to mail as well as staff time to print and process. Email billing would save money and staff time, so Liden would like to offer residents a one-time \$5 credit on their water bill if they opt for email billing. If Council approved, the offer would be available through the month of April.

Council member Massmann then asked about residents being able to set up auto-pay or online payments without paying the \$3 charge per \$100 each month and about being able to submit a meter reading when making payment online. Liden explained that the \$3 charge for online payments was an automatic charge through the water billing software, Softline Data, for the finance company that processes the payments. Liden explained further that she had talked to Softline Data last spring about getting that charge reduced, especially due to the pandemic and more people wanting to pay online. Softline Data said that they were unable to lower that charge since the finance

company was not willing to lower it. As for the meter reading submittal, Liden explained that there currently was no place to submit that on the payment portal but that the readings can be either called or emailed in to the office.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Massmann to approve offering a one time \$5 water bill credit as an incentive for residents to sign up for email billing. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

Since it was 7 p.m. and time for the Sandness Public Hearing, a motion was made by council member Wise to close the regular meeting and open the Public Hearing. The Public Hearing was called to order by Mayor Wilkens. Administrator Liden explained that the purpose of the hearing was a variance request by Mark Sandness to build a garage with a 19-foot peak and that City Code only allowed for an 18-foot peak. Liden reported that she had published the hearing notice and sent letters to all property owners within 350 feet as is required under City Code. Only three people had called the office to inquire about the notice and all three had no issues with approving the variance request. Mayor Wilkens noted that the shop would be located on the west side of Sandness' lot which abutted with the end of Albert Ave. and that there were several larger shops located in that area already. There were no further questions or comments, so Mayor Wilkens closed the Public Hearing and reconvened the regular meeting.

A motion was made by council member Wise to approve the building height variance requested by Mark Sandness. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

Mayor Wilkens phoned Fair Meadow Nursing Home Angie Leiting to give the nursing home report. Leiting reported that they began and ended the month of February with 39 residents, operating at 93.7% capacity. There were 152 home delivered meals served.

For the Covid report, Leiting stated that they were done with vaccinations at the nursing home and assisted living. They had received another stimulus check for \$59,649 for infection control. She reported also that they were now testing monthly and that residents were only tested if they had symptoms.

For the financial reports Leiting reported that she had been unable to export the report and break it down by Nursing Home and Assisted Living so all the reports showed them combined this month. For the month of February, a profit of \$26,670 was shown and for the year to date, the home and assisted living were showing a profit of \$376,435. In reviewing the budget to actual report Leiting noted that the advertising costs were way over budget since staffing has been very difficult during Covid. Also noted was that total income was higher than budgeted but that expenses were also higher.

Discussion was then held on testing with Council member Massmann asking if Leiting had been given any news on when the monthly testing would be discontinued. Leiting said that there was currently no end in sight for the required testing. To save money, the home was currently using the in-house antigen test since the tests processed at Mayo Clinic were simply too expensive. Leiting ended her report by informing Council that there were currently two empty units in the assisted living.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:14 on a motion by Council member Massmann that was seconded by Council member Wang.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator