

Fertile City Council Minutes November 8, 2021

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, November 8, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Mary Kiefert, Todd Wise, Stanton Wang, and Matthew Massmann. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting, Airport Engineer Dan Triller, City Engineer Kris Carlson, Julie Morales, Pat Ranz, Eric Ranz, Steve and Cynthia Hibbard, Michelle Cote, Megan Pederson, Lionel 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.

Approval of the agenda was next and Mayor Wilkens asked to move the City Engineer report to the top of the agenda since Kris Carlson had another meeting to attend at 7 p.m.

The agenda with the change of order was approved on a motion by Council member Massmann that was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The first item on the agenda was the City Engineer report. Kris Carlson introduced himself and explained that he would be taking over the City of Fertile account for Ulteig Engineers. He noted that he had 20 years of experience working with Ulteig Engineers and that he looked forward to working with the City. There were no current projects to report on at the time.

There were no public comments.

The minutes of the October 11, 2021 regular meeting and the October 19, 2021 special meeting were approved as presented on a motion by Council member Massmann that was seconded by Council member Wang 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 October. Liden noted the deposit from the State for the airport grant, from MN Public Facilities for final payment on the 2019 water project, and also the deposit from the fire department for equipment. Under the disbursements Liden noted the check to LPL Financial for the fire department pension fund and explained that the funds for that had come from the State late in the month in September. Liden also noted the check to Short Elliott Hendrickson for engineer services for the airport project, several disbursements that were shown in italics which were for the Learning Center and would be reimbursed, and also three checks for fire department equipment costs that were pass through amounts paid for by the check in the deposit listing. Liden briefly reviewed the budget to actual reports for the four funds and noted that the total revenue and expense amounts in almost all the funds were on par with the budget or better than what was budgeted.

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

Under the Airport, pay application #2 had been submitted for the apron and taxiway project which was 95% complete. The pay application was for \$424,744.28 and Liden noted that there was \$33,660.71 being held for retainage until the project was totally complete.

A motion was made by Council member Massmann to approve payment on pay application #2. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The next item up for approval under the airport was change order #1 for the apron and taxiway project. Administrator Liden reminded Council that an interim change order had been approved in September for doing a mill and overlay on the south end of the taxiway on the final section of asphalt that wasn't being totally

rehabilitated. The final change order #1 that was presented for approval had the actual cost of the mill and overlay rather than an estimate.

After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Council member Wise to approve change order #1. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

The final item to be addressed regarding the airport was the maintenance and operations agreement with the State of Minnesota. Liden explained that it was the usual agreement with the State and that it covered the next two State fiscal years. Maintenance costs would be reimbursed at 75% up to a total of \$15,553 per year. Liden noted that the resolution that accompanied the agreement gave the authority to the Mayor and City Administrator to sign the agreement with the State.

A motion was made by Council member Wang to approve Resolution #11-1-21 and the accompanying contract for maintenance and operations costs at the airport. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave the report for Fair Meadow Nursing Home. The month of October began with 38 residents and ended with 37, operating at 85.63% capacity. They had also served 138 home delivered meals.

Upon review of the profit and loss for the month of October Leiting reported that the nursing home and assisted living combined for a loss of just over \$198,000 with the nursing home showing a loss of just under \$190,000 and the assisted living a loss of just over \$8,000. Leiting noted that the loss for October was partly due to the fact that there were three payroll periods during the month. Since the new fiscal year started October 1st, the October report was also the year-to-date report. Leiting then gave a brief overview of the profit and loss budget to actual report.

Discussion was then held on the accountability bonuses that had been discussed at the special budget committee meeting that had been held in October. Leiting explained that the bonuses could cost up to \$4,100 per month and that it wouldn't be financially feasible to do a payout on the bonuses just one time a year. It would be more feasible to pay the bonuses out each quarter instead. Leiting also noted that the bonuses had been discussed at a staff meeting and that staff felt they shouldn't be punished for Covid related absences and that those absences should be exempt for the purposes of the accountability bonus.

Leiting reported that the Covid vaccination mandate had officially passed and that it would take effect starting January 4th. Discussion was held on the religious and medical exemptions that would be allowed and that those would likely cover most of the unvaccinated staff. Leiting, the Director of Nursing, and the Infection Preventionist would work on the forms that would be required for the exemptions.

The final matter to address with the nursing home was the ECPN program renewal. Leiting explained that the ECPN program was only for City owned nursing homes and that Fair Meadow and Fertile had participated in the program for 15 years. Under the program in 2021, Fair Meadow received an additional \$17.22 per resident per day. In 2022 that amount would go up to \$23.09 per resident per day. The amount that the City paid into the State for participation in the program would also go up from \$7,883 per month to \$9,517 per month.

After a brief discussion of the matter a motion was made by Council member Massmann to approve participation in the ECPN program for 2022. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

There was no Public Works report since Kevin Nephew, Public Works Supervisor, was absent.

The City Administrator's report was briefly reviewed with Administrator Liden noting all the quarterly filings and reports that had been completed in October as well as participation in meetings with the Fair Meadow Personnel and Budget Committees and the City Personnel Committee. 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.

For the Fire Department, Council member Wang reported that the department had responded to one mutual aid call and one car accident. They were currently working with Norman County on the paging system. Wang noted that the kindergarten class had also visited the fire hall for a tour.

For the Personnel Committee Administrator Liden reported that the committee had met to go over the wage scale and information that had been prepared by Baker Tilly. Liden gave a brief background on the work that Baker Tilly had done on job descriptions and the market study they had done to get the wage scale developed. The market study was completed for cities of a similar size and structure to Fertile. Mayor Wilkens noted that Baker Tilly had been hired in order to determine if City staff were paid comparatively and fairly according to the market and that he wanted the new wage scale adopted and staff put on the scale according to their years of service so that staff were compensated fairly. He noted that they had done similar work with the Fair Meadow wage scale and that changes were made to that periodically as well according to market data.

Further discussion was held on the wage scale and the work done by Baker Tilly. Council member Wise asked about the job descriptions that had been updated. Liden noted that the job descriptions had been reviewed by the Personnel Committee a few months earlier but that it had taken some time for the market study to be completed. The Personnel Committee had made a few small changes to some of the job descriptions and had approved them. Council member Wise stated that he would like to review the job descriptions before the wage scale was approved. The matter was tabled until the December meeting so that the updated job descriptions could be distributed to Council for review.

The first item up under old business was the Community Voice mobile app that had been briefly discussed at the October meeting. Megan Pederson was present to explain the app and how it could be used to improve communication with City residents. Pederson noted that many cities utilize Facebook and websites to communicate with residents but neither method was very effective. The Community Voice mobile app would be a one stop shop for not only residents but also visitors to get information about Fertile as well as local and area events that they might be interested in. The app could also be used for push notifications to let residents know of things such as a local emergency.

Pederson explained further that users of the app would be able to personally tailor their preferences on the app and choose the items they wished to be notified of. Further discussion was held on the benefits of using an app for resident communication with Council member Massmann commenting that apps such as this one were the wave of the future. Mayor Wilkens asked about the cost of the app and Megan Pederson explained that the initial buy-in for the app would be \$2,000 and that there would be an annual cost of \$750 after that. She anticipated that the app would be ready for use in either late February or early March. Administrator Liden noted that the Community Club and possibly other organizations could be interested in helping to cover some of the buy-in and monthly costs.

A motion was made by Council member Massmann to invest in the Community Voice app. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

The other item under old business was the matter of the access road to the sewer ponds. Administrator Liden reported that the City Attorney was looking into the matter and would report after he had an opportunity to talk to the DNR since they owned land adjoining the road.

The first item addressed under new business was the road agreement with Garfield Township regarding the maintenance and upkeep of Old Mill Road (435th St. SW). Mayor Wilkens gave a brief history of the original agreement which was part of an annexation process in 1990. Through recent conversations with the current Garfield Township board it had been decided that the agreement should be terminated and the township could resume maintenance of the road.

Administrator Liden explained that the City Attorney, Stephen Larson, had drafted a termination of road agreement document and it had already been provided to Garfield Township so it could be sent to their attorney for review. Once it had been reviewed, Garfield would either sign it as is or recommend changes that their attorney suggested.

Council could approve the agreement as presented and then, if changes were made to the agreement by Garfield Township, approve the changes at a later meeting.

Upon further discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wise to approve the termination of road agreement as presented. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

The next item to be discussed was the classification of a tax forfeited parcel that the County would be putting up for sale. Administrator Liden explained that the classification was a formality and that Council just had to verify that the property was not “conservation” property. Michelle Cote from Polk County provided further information on the classification and potential uses for tax forfeited property. She noted that the City could take forfeited properties if they had a municipal need for it for something such as a park. The current property under discussion, however, was a small parcel that abutted the back of a private home on the east side of town, so there was no interest in the City using the parcel.

A motion was made by Council member Kiefert to approve the non-conservation classification of parcel number 85.00497.00. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

A potential land purchase was the next item up for discussion. Administrator Liden explained that there was a parcel of land owned by Nephew Land Holdings that was located right on Summit Avenue. Bob Nephew thought that the parcel had been sold along with the other parcels located along Summit Avenue but it had not been included in the sale. Since the parcel was located directly on the road, Nephew was willing to give the parcel to the City if the City paid for all legal and closing costs associated with the sale.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve the purchase of the Nephew parcel on Summit Avenue. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

Administrator Liden then noted that when she had reviewed the Nephew parcel location with Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, they had noticed that there was no formal road right-of-way established for Summit Avenue. In order to establish a formal road right-of-way, extensive survey work would need to be done and affected property owners along Summit would need to be talked to about acquiring the necessary portions of their properties to establish the road. Liden would work with the City Attorney to get further information on proceeding with the process.

The final item up for discussion was the current situation with the City Engineer. Mayor Wilkens stated that with the removal of Alex Ranz as the City Engineer, the City would basically be starting over with Kris Carlson as the new engineer even though they were both with Ulteig. Wilkens wondered if now would be a good time to do another Request for Proposals (RFP) for engineer services just to look and see what other firms had to offer the City.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wise to start the RFP process for City engineering services. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m. on a motion by Council member Wise.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator