

Fertile City Council Minutes October 11, 2021

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, October 11, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Todd Wise, Stanton Wang, and Matthew Massmann. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting, Airport Engineer Dan Triller, City Engineer Alex Ranz, Mary Kiefert, 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 said that he had an addition to agenda that he wanted to address first. Wilkens said that he had received a letter from Mary Kiefert indicating her interest in filling the Council seat vacated by Linda Widrig. Wilkens asked that it be addressed as the first item on the agenda.

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

Administrator Liden handed out copies of the letter that Mary Kiefert had submitted expressing her interest in serving on Council. Mayor Wilkens noted that they had been looking for a long time for someone to serve and he thanked Mary Kiefert. Wilkens then read the letter aloud that Kiefert had written. He ended by stating that Kiefert would be a good addition to the Council and that he would like to appoint her for the position.

A motion was made by Council member Massmann to appoint Mary Kiefert to the vacant Council seat. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried. Mary Kiefert was then sworn in and took her seat at the Council table.

There were no public comments.

The minutes of the September 13, 2021 were approved on a motion by Council member Massmann, 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 September. Liden noted the deposit from the State for the airport grant, the fire aid that had been received, and also the check from the fire department for equipment. Liden noted the checks written to Verdell Olson for a snow blower, Agassiz Asphalt for the taxiway and apron project, and Sellin Brothers for the final payment on the water project. Noted also was a check to the fire department for \$30,000 which was to be deposited in a savings account towards the purchase of a new fire truck. The department had written a check to the City for \$20,000 in August and another check for \$10,000 in September, so the \$30,000 was pass-through. 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.

Dan Triller with Short Elliott Hendrickson gave an update on the airport. He said that he and Mayor Wilkens had gone out to look at the apron and taxiway project that was nearly complete except for a few punch list items that would be completed shortly. He reported that MnDOT had some questions on the airport acquisition as it would relate to a future runway extension, so it looked like MnDOT was interested in moving forward on that project in the next year or two. Triller said that an environmental assessment would need to be completed first, but if the funding were available and approved that SEH would start work on the design this winter. Mayor Wilkens commented that the new asphalt on the apron and runway looked great and that there had been another inquiry about building a new hangar at the airport.

Alex Ranz, City Engineer with Ulteig, gave his report to Council. The first matter addressed was approval of the resolution accepting the work that was done on the 2019 and 2020 water projects as well as the certificate of final approval. A motion was made by Council member Wang to approve the resolution accepting the work and the certificate of final approval. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

Ranz went on to explain the possible future project list that was included in the Council packets. Discussion was held on the meters and systems that could be installed as part of the project. The total cost of \$300,000 would include 425 meters and the hub and software that would read the meters automatically. Ranz explained that one benefit of the new meters and system would be that water could be shut off at the hub so it could be done quickly and efficiently.

Ranz reviewed the water main and hydrant projects that were listed and shown on the map. Starting at the north end of town, the two hydrants across from TDS would be combined into one and the two lines that converge in that area would be looped. The next project on Albert Ave. would be to put in a 6" line to replace the 2" line and at the east end of Albert, it would hook into the 8" line. A new line would be installed on Second St. NW and would hook into the line at Jefferson Ave. SW which would loop off another dead end. On Jefferson Ave SW one block of new 6" main would be installed. On the south end of Blaine Street a new main would be installed and potentially a new sewer main.

Ranz ended by explaining that the deadline for the Project Priority List was May of 2022 so there was time to firm up the cost estimates and refine the list further if needed before it would have to be submitted to the State.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave the report for Fair Meadow Nursing Home. The month of September began with 39 residents and ended with 38, operating at 89.04% capacity. They had also served 127 home delivered meals.

Upon review of the profit and loss for the month of September Leiting reported that the nursing home and assisted living combined for a profit of just under \$40,000 with the nursing home showing a profit of \$26,500 and the assisted living a profit of just over \$13,000. For the year-to-date profit and loss as of September 30th, the home and assisted living showed a combined profit of over \$563,000. The nursing home showed a profit of almost \$596,000 and the assisted living a loss of over \$36,000.

Leiting gave a brief overview of the budget to actual report and noted that the combined revenues were at nearly 110% of budget. Nursing home expenses were at 99.86% of budget and the assisted living was at 102% for a combined 100.11% of budget.

Next Leiting reported that she had talked to staff about the Group Me text messaging application for sending out group texts to staff giving a daily report and updates. Staff indicated that they were not interested in receiving daily texts, so instead a daily report would be put in the announcement book at the front desk and staff would be responsible for checking the book when they reported for work every day. Council member Massmann noted that he hoped there wouldn't be any further complaints about lack of communication from staff since the Group Me app was a very effective tool for improving communication.

Leiting went over the list of new staff hires and noted that not all of them had started yet since they had to give 30 days' notice to their current employers. She also reported that in an update from Leading age they had noted that 70% of the nursing homes in Minnesota were limiting admissions due to staff shortages, so Fair Meadow wasn't the only nursing home facing those issues. There were currently 23,000 unfilled nursing positions in the state. This was followed by a discussion on the vaccine mandates and what effect that would have on staffing. Leiting ended her report by noting that the Personnel and Budget Committees still needed to meet to approve the wage scale and budget.

City Administrator Lisa Liden gave her report to Council. She reported that she had continued working with Riverview on space preparations for the upcoming clinic opening. She had also finalized and filed levy paperwork

and sent it to Polk County. Liden had also prepared for and attended an EDA meeting and prepared the loan paperwork for two EDA business loans. She had attended a virtual meeting with the Polk County loan pool, prepared paperwork for the 2022 health insurance plan, filed for a parade permit with MnDOT for homecoming, and worked on filing mortgage satisfaction paperwork for a business loan.

Kevin Nephew, Public Works Supervisor, was next to give his report to Council. He began by reporting that hydrants would be flushed on Thursday and Friday of the following week. He reported also that the water line at the airport would be finished next week and that the in-well pressure tank would be installed the week after.

Mayor Wilkens inquired about the installation of the natural gas line at the airport and if there was a timeline for that yet. Administrator Liden reported that Short Elliott Hendrickson had been into the office to look at the Airport Layout Plan map for an approximation of where the new entrance road would be located since SEH had been in communication with Community Co-op on the natural gas. They got measurements of where the road would be in relation to the west property line so that the future road location could be flagged and Community Co-op could install the natural gas line outside of the future road right-of-way.

Nephew went on to address the replacement of the rink dasher boards again. Initially Council had approved purchasing all new fiberglass boards but it was learned that there was not enough information on their cold weather durability to justify the high cost. Council had then voted to replace the boards with treated and painted plywood. A rink user had contacted Nephew to state that he was not in favor of the plywood and that he felt we should try a plastic sheeting product that he was familiar with that held up well in extreme temperature changes. He had gotten a sample of the sheeting and Chris Zimmel had put it in his freezer for three days to duplicate cold temperatures. When it was removed from the freezer, he then struck it with a hammer several times and it didn't crack or break so it seemed to hold up well. The sheets were available for \$180 each which was more expensive than the plywood but much cheaper than the fiberglass boards. Nephew explained that he would like to try the plastic sheeting by removing the broken dasher boards and replacing them all in one area with the plastic sheeting.

After discussion of the matter, Council member Massmann made the motion to rescind the previous motion to use plywood to replace the dasher boards and instead purchase up to 15 sheets of the plastic sheeting to replace the broken dasher boards. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

Under the Learning Center Mayor Wilkens reported that a buckthorn removal program had been held the previous week and that a large group of volunteers had removed four large piles of buckthorn from the understory of the woods area around the Learning Center building and driveway. A brief discussion was held on buckthorn and the areas of the Learning Center where it was currently a problem.

There was nothing to report for the fire department.

Under the City Personnel Committee it was noted that a meeting needed to be scheduled to review the new wage scale.

Under old business, the only item to address was the sewer pond access road. Mayor Wilkens reported that he was still gathering facts and information on the road.

Mayor Wilkens also asked about the status of the Tollefson and Christian property transfers so that the City would own those areas where Learning Center trails were located on private property. Administrator Liden stated that she was still waiting to hear on the Nelson property so that all the areas could be surveyed at the same time for drawing up the deeds for the properties.

The first item under new business was liquor licenses for 2022. A motion was made by Council member Wang to approve licenses for The Other Place, Fertile Wine and Spirits, Side Street Bar and Grill, and Erickson's Smokehouse. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

The next agenda item was the assessment of three delinquent water accounts to the 2022 property tax rolls and the write off of one commercial water account. For the assessments, Administrator Liden explained that the three accounts were for vacant residential properties. Prior to the new water rate system that started in September of 2019, those three property owners weren't getting a monthly bill since the water was turned off. Since the new rate system started, however, the properties were billed monthly for the availability fees and capital improvement charge. No payments had been made on the accounts since that time. She added that the one property would be taken over by the County for unpaid taxes in the near future so it would be prudent to get the delinquent water account assessed to the property prior to that happening.

After a brief discussion, Council member Wise made the motion to assess the three delinquent accounts to the 2022 taxes. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

In regard to the delinquent commercial water account Liden explained that the property had been foreclosed on and subsequently sold. Liden felt it would be unfair to the new owner to assess it on their taxes so it would be best to write the account off.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to write off the delinquent water account for Heart and Soul Foods. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

The next item, the Community Voice Mobile App, was tabled until the November meeting so that Megan Pederson could attend the meeting and show a demonstration.

The final item to address was the hiring of a new custodian for the Community Center and rink building. Administrator Liden explained that she had been doing the cleaning since 2016 when the previous custodian had left the position and no one had applied for the job when it was advertised. Liden was ready to be done with the extra work so she had advertised the position again and had gotten two applicants. Liden wished to hire Joyce Fairman for the position since she had a lot of experience in cleaning and would be good for the position.

A motion was made by Council member Kiefert to hire Joyce Fairman for the custodian position. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried with Council member Wang abstaining.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:56 pm on a motion by Council member Massmann.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator