

Fertile City Council Minutes January 10, 2022

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, January 10, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Mary Kiefert, Todd Wise, and Matthew Massmann. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Public Works employee Chris Zimmel, Barry Glienke from Apex Engineers, 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 Wise and was carried.

Under Public Comments, Barry Glienke from Apex Engineers introduced himself to those present and stated that he wanted to sit in on a meeting since his firm would be sending in a response to the Engineer Request for Proposals that had been advertised.

The minutes of the December 13, 2021 regular meeting were approved as presented on a motion by Council member Kiefert 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 December. Liden noted that the deposits for the month were higher than average due to receiving both Local Government Aid as well as the second disbursement of property taxes to the City. Liden also noted the reimbursement check that had been received from Agassiz Environmental Learning Center and explained that items had been ordered for discovery kits and signage for the AELC over the past couple of months using the City debit card and the reimbursement check was for those purchases. Under the check listing Liden noted the amounts that had been spent for the AELC as well as the fire department

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

Under the airport Mayor Wilkens reported that he had spoken with the engineers the previous week about the Environmental Study for the runway expansion. Administrator Liden reported that Matt Lebens had called late the week before to inform the City that the runway expansion and the associated projects with that had not been approved for funding for the coming year. There were other higher priority projects in the State that required funding so the runway expansion was put on hold for now. Lebens also added that the City would likely have to prove the need for the expansion by showing based aircraft that needed a longer runway.

Mayor Wilkens went on to report that he had met with the Pederson's at the airport so they could see what was available for hangar locations. Pederson's are interested in building a 60' by 60' hangar for their plane that was currently located in Nebraska. They expressed that they would be interested in building their hangar directly west of the new hangar built by Larry Walters.

There was no City Engineer report.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave the report for Fair Meadow Nursing Home. The month of December began with 41 residents and ended with 38, operating at 93.24% capacity. They had also served 182 home delivered meals. She noted that Fair Meadow was currently doing better than many of the nursing homes in the area as far as occupancy and staffing. There were currently three empty beds at the home but there was a waiting list so they should be filled soon.

Leiting noted that they had started using the Ability System but they had run into a few glitches with the system so they still weren't using it 100% for time tracking. She reported also that they had received their funding of \$110,000 to be used for retention bonuses. Staff would be paid a bonus of \$2.50 per hour through the start of March.

Next Leiting reviewed the financial statements noting that the cash balance was still lower than she liked it but that it was working its way back up after the three payroll periods in October. Both the nursing home and assisted living showed losses totaling just under \$35,000 for the month of December. For the year-to-date report, total losses were \$244,500 with the nursing home showing a loss of \$241,800 and the assisted living a loss of \$2,700. Leiting noted that the high costs of temp staff was impacting the bottom line. For the budget to actual comparison Leiting stated that the income was below budget level due to Medicaid payments that were still pending.

Leiting ended her report by noting that there were two area homes where the National Guard had been called in to help with staffing shortages and she was thankful that Fair Meadow was currently doing well with staffing. She noted also that Fair Meadow now had a five-star rating after the last survey. There was a new system, however, where they would lose stars if there was high turnover in either Administration or the Director of Nursing position.

Kevin Nephew, Public Works Supervisor, was next to give his report to Council. The first item up for discussion was a pickup with a plow that was available for \$25,900 in Fergus Falls. The pick up was a 2008 Ford F350 with just over 48,000 miles. It was a single cab so it had an 8' long bed which would work good for the turn off wrenches that need to be hauled around. If Council approved the purchase, Kevin Nephew and Chris Zimmel would go to look at it and take it for a test drive.

Council member Massmann expressed his concern that the price was higher than the Kelly Blue book amount but that it was hard to separate the cost between the pickup and the attached plow. Administrator Liden noted that a new plow would be \$8,500. Mayor Wilkens noted that the market was really tight now for used vehicles and that most of them were selling for well above Blue Book values.

Discussion was held on the condition of the pickup that the City currently owns. Chris Zimmel with Public Works stated that the pickup runs but not that great, there were holes in the floorboards, and the windows fogged up so bad that it was hard to see. He noted also that it was needing more frequent repairs. Council member Massmann asked how many hours the pickup is used each year and Kevin Nephew estimated around 1,000 miles per year.

After further discussion, a motion was made by Council member Wise to approve up to \$25,900 for the purchase of the pickup plus other necessary closing costs. The motion was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

Kevin Nephew reported that the State would be coming in at 3 a.m. the following morning to remove snow along Highway 32. Nephew then asked about hauling snow piles around the downtown area and whether the City should charge for doing that. Discussion was held on where the piles were located and who was piling the snow and where the snow came from. Mayor Wilkens and Kevin Nephew discussed the history of snow removal downtown and how, years ago, there were huge piles at the curb until the State came through to clear snow. Now the contractors removing the sidewalk snow were removing the snow entirely from alongside the streets in the downtown area which greatly benefitted not only the store owners, but also anyone going into the stores. It was determined that the City would continue to bear the cost of removing the snow piles since it was a benefit to everyone. Kevin Nephew then asked about hiring an extra truck to make the removal more efficient and quicker. Approval was given to hire an extra truck to get the job done.

Administrator Liden gave her report on her activities for the previous month. Liden noted that she had finalized the liquor and tobacco licenses, reviewed and signed the trail equipment grant, met with the League of MN Cities Insurance Trust for the annual loss control meeting, did the annual review of the property and liability coverage for the City, and had worked with Terry Baumgartner, the new rink manager, to get the ice rink up and running for the winter.

For the Learning Center report it was noted that their annual meeting would be held on January 20th.

There were no reports for the Fire Department or the City Personnel Committee.

Under new business, the Resolution of Annual Appointments was the first item up for discussion. Administrator Liden began by passing out the letter of resignation that had been submitted by Council member Wang since that would affect the appointments to committees.

There were no changes necessary for the official newspaper, posting location, regular meeting date, official depository, and City attorney. Council member Wise was chosen as Vice Mayor, and Council members Wise and Massmann were chosen as nursing home board liaisons. For the EDA Board, Wise and Kiefert were chosen to serve, and for the Emergency Management Team, the change in Vice Mayor was noted for that board, as well as the change of Fire Chief, so Jason Haas was named to serve since he was the new Fire Chief and Tim Oistad was named to the board as the new Assistant Chief. With Council member Massmann's recommendation, Chad Braun was also appointed as a representative of County EMS.

For the City Personnel Committee, it was determined that Mayor Wilkens, Council member Massmann, Michelle Cote, and April Grunhovd would continue to serve. For the Fair Meadow Personnel Committee, Council members Massmann and Kiefert would serve in addition to Michelle Cote and Lisa Liden. For the Fair Meadow Finance Committee, Mayor Wilkens, Council member Wise, Michelle Cote, and Lisa Liden would serve.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve Resolution #1-1-22, The Resolution of Annual Appointments and Designations. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

The annual decision on whether to waive the statutory limits for the City's liability insurance was the next item addressed. Administrator Liden briefly explained what it meant to waive the statutory limits. A motion was made by Council member Massmann to not waive the statutory limits on liability insurance. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The final item to address was the resignation of Council member Wang. Wang had stated in his letter that his resignation was for personal reasons and that he had enjoyed serving as Council member. Mayor Wilkens stated that Wang had been a great addition to Council and that he would be missed.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Massmann to regretfully accept Wang's resignation from Council and acknowledge an open position on Council. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried with Council member Wise voting no.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 on a motion by Council member Kiefert that was seconded by Council member Massmann.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator