

## **Fertile City Council Minutes February 12, 2024**

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, February 12, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were Mayor Daniel Wilkens and Council members Mary Kiefert, Matthew Massman, Todd Wise, and Amanda Bosman. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Deputy City Administrator Stacy Erickson, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Public Works assistant Chris Zimmel, Preston Douville with KRJB, and Connie Hamernik from the Fertile Journal. Several community members were also present.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wilkens at 7:00 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 Bosman and was carried.

There were no public comments.

The minutes of the January 8, 2024 regular meeting were approved as presented on a motion by Council member Kiefert that was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

Administrator Lisa Liden gave the Treasurer's Report. Liden noted a few out of the ordinary receipts for the month of January including the amount for the cable franchise fee and small amounts for property taxes and TIF revenue. In the check listing, Liden noted the check to Big Jim's Tire for new tires for the payloader, the checks to Northland Trust for bond payments, the check to First Independent Bank for the Community Center bond, the check to Christiansen Construction for pay application #4 for the community center project, and the check to Bond Trust Services for the TIF Bond. The balance sheet and profit and loss report were also reviewed.

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

Under department reports there was nothing to report for the airport.

City Engineer Jeff Ebsch was present at the meeting to report on progress on funding for the potential water projects. He began by noting that he had gone on a walkthrough of the project areas with Public Works staff as well as a review of the project map with them. Josh Wayt, funding specialist with Moore Engineering joined the meeting by phone to give an update on the progress in securing Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) funding for the water main project. Based on the preliminary application, MN Dept. of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), had scored Fertile's application as marginally competitive so Wayt held a meeting with DEED to determine how best to improve the City's score on the full application. There were a few small changes that DEED recommended as well as involving the public to participate in the process by holding a public hearing on the matter. Wayt then went over the timing of the public hearing and application process. He stated that he would put together a Power Point presentation for the March meeting. It was noted that the full application was due on April 17<sup>th</sup> and that mid-summer the winners of the grants would be announced.

A motion was made by Council member Massmann to call for a Public Hearing on March 11<sup>th</sup> for public input on applying for SCDP funding for the water project. The motion was seconded by Council member Bosman and was carried.

Jeff Ebsch then asked for approval for Moore Engineering's Task Order #5 for \$1,500 to complete the full SCDP application. A motion was made by Council member Massman to approve Task Order #5 and the motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

Discussion was held on the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program offered through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Jeff Ebsch explained that the grant program offered 50% funding for outdoor recreation projects. He stated that he had spoken with Deputy Administrator Stacy Erickson and she had relayed that the City was interested in potentially putting concrete over the outdoor ice rink area so that the rink could be used for summer recreation including roller blading and possibly pickle ball. The schedule for the grant applications was then discussed and with the application deadline of February 29<sup>th</sup>, it was determined to table the matter and look at applying during the next round.

Jeff Ebsch ended by reporting on the Lead Service Line Inventory project. The project was funded by the State and involved getting a complete inventory of all lead service lines in town. Kevin and Chris would be working with Moore on getting the inventory done. One benefit of the project was that all of the curb stops in town would be GPS mapped so that it would be easier to find shut offs in emergency situations.

For the nursing home report, City Administrator Liden explained that there were no financial reports since she was still dealing with Quick Books issues that needed to be resolved. Council member Massmann then addressed a question that had come up regarding the Advisory Board and whether those meetings were subject to open meeting law. Massmann explained that the attorney had advised that those meetings would be subject to open meeting law since it was stated in the City Code that they were. Massmann noted that the League of MN Cities would be consulted on the matter as well.

Public Works was next on the agenda and the first item up for discussion was the purchase of a new lawn mower. John Deere had provided three different quotes and one was similar in size to the current mower and the other two were for more horsepower and one also included the option of a cab. All three quotes also included the option of a two-stage snowblower attachment. Public Works Director Kevin Nephew explained that the current mower was about three years old and they typically used it for 300 to 400 hours per year. Mayor Wilkens commented that the mower had been discussed last year as well and that when they got the current mower, the previous one had no trade in value, so it would be prudent to look at replacement while the current mower had trade in value. Nephew noted that the trade in value for the current mower would be \$9,000.

A lengthy discussion was held on the three different options including the necessity of the cab and also the snow blower attachment. It was determined that the lowest quote, for the 1500 Terrain Cut with the 72" deck would suit our needs the best since that was the most similar to the current machine. With the trade-in, the total cost would be \$17,844.

A motion was made by Council member Massmann to approve the purchase with trade-in of the John Deere 1550 mower and deck for \$17,844. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

Nephew went on to report that Chris Zimmel had been working with Garden Valley on some of the City's communication lines that are currently copper. Copper lines are currently utilized for communication to the water tower, treatment plant, street lights, and lift station. Garden Valley is looking to remove all copper from their systems so the City would need to look at what other options are available. Chris Zimmel reported that he had been in contact with someone who had worked with setting up the communication at the treatment plant and would be able to get us some options and what those would

cost. There are cellular options available as well as fiberoptic and some of the panels at the lift station and treatment plant would have to be replaced so those options would work.

Council member Kiefert asked what the time line was with Garden Valley for getting rid of the copper lines. Zimmel stated that they weren't really clear on that and Nephew said that the matter had first come up for discussion once they had gone to fiberoptic throughout town a few years ago and that now Garden Valley was working on a tighter timeline on the elimination of the copper. Nephew hoped that we would have the summer and fall to look at the options for possible install in the spring next year. For the street lights Nephew had hoped that it could wait until the highway 32 project when the streetlights are replaced, but that project was likely too far down the road to wait for that.

Mayor Wilkens asked if there had been any problems with water lines freezing this year and Nephew reported that the only freeze up he was aware of was the sewer at the Nature Center which was kind of odd given the warm temperatures this winter. Nephew said that they might have to look at digging up that line and either insulating it better or even put heat tape on the line. That would also eliminate the need to put straw bales over the line in the fall and cleaning up the straw in the spring.

City Administrator Liden was next to give her report. She began by noting that January is quite busy with all of the end of year payroll reporting with W2's and 1099's. The annual reporting is in addition to the quarterly payroll reporting that has to be done. Liden had completed the annual summary budget report with the State Auditor's Office in addition to continued work with the engineers on the community center project. There was continued work with Moore Engineering on the water project funding, work with the City Attorney on the non-disclosure agreement with Cornerstone, as well as assisting with preparation of financial and other information for Cornerstone.

For the Learning Center it was reported that Winterfest had been held the previous Sunday.

For the Fire Department it was reported that there was only one call during the month of January which was a false alarm. Deputy Administrator Stacy Erickson commented that the Fire Department Annual Meeting will be on Thursday.

Under old business the first item addressed was the City's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Liden explained that the City had gotten two disbursements of those funds that were actually federal funds sent through the state to city governments. The first disbursement had been given to Fair Meadow to cover covid costs but the second payment that the City had received had still not been disbursed. Since the time those funds had been received, there had been discussions on sending the second disbursement over to Fair Meadow, but that had not happened yet. Liden asked that the disbursement to Fair Meadow be made now.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve disbursing the City's second payment of ARPA funds to Fair Meadow in the amount of \$44,696. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

Under old business, an update was given on the Community Center project. The HVAC units will be shipped out the week of February 19<sup>th</sup> and will arrive the week of February 26<sup>th</sup>. It was anticipated that installation would begin the week of March 4<sup>th</sup>. Liden explained that much of the interior work on the ducting and electrical would take place above the ceiling grid and that Stacy had been staying in communication with the engineers and the other building occupants about the timing of the installation and the impact that it will have on normal operations. The work would also have to be done around special events that are already on the calendar.

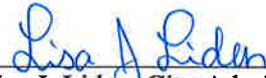
The final item on the agenda was payments that were due to Health Dimensions (HDG). Liden explained that HDG has been very patient with getting paid given the transitional issues at Fair Meadow with the billing and everything, but that it was time to make payment on the past due amounts. She went on to explain that Fair Meadow doesn't have the funds to pay HDG and also pay their regular vendors, so Liden was asking if the City could loan the funds to Fair Meadow to get the past due invoices paid. The total owed to HDG was \$71,954.60 and some of that amount was for work on the wage study and job analysis and the remainder was for interim costs.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wise to loan Fair Meadow \$71,954.60 to pay the outstanding Health Dimensions invoices. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:23 on a motion by Council member Massmann that was seconded by Council member Kiefert.



Daniel Wilkens  
Daniel Wilkens, Mayor



Lisa J. Liden  
Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator