

Fertile City Council Meeting October 14, 2024

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, October 14, 2024 at 7:00 pm at the Community Center. Present were Mayor Daniel Wilkens and Council members Mary Kiefert, Matthew Massmann, and Amanda Bosman. Also present were City Administrator Lisa Liden, Deputy City Administrator Stacy Erickson, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Public Works staff Chris Zimmer, representatives from KRJB and The Fertile Journal and several members of the community.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wilkens at 7:00 p.m. and began with those present reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Under agenda approval City Administrator Liden noted that the quote for the nursing home grinder pump could be removed from the agenda since another quote would be submitted. The agenda as amended was approved on a motion by Council member Bosman that was seconded by Council member Kiefert and carried.

Public comments were opened with a reminder from Mayor Wilkens that it was a comment period of ten minutes with no more than five minutes per participant. April Swenby approached the table and shared her prepared statement to council, asking that her comments be included in the minutes. She asked questions of the performance of Administrator Liden, shared her frustrations with council and staff about the lack of definition of "reasonable amount of time" for data requests, and expressed her disappointment in Council member Bosman for not being more than a good listener. Mayor Wilkens advised her that her allotted time had been used after five minutes had passed. Another member of the audience volunteered their time to allow Ms. Swenby to finish as she continued to highlight her concerns about financial reports, costs for interim administration at the nursing home and how the City had handled finances for both the City and the nursing home.

The next item on the agenda was approval of the minutes. Mayor Wilkens asked Council if they had reviewed the minutes of the September 9, 2024 meeting and if they had any additions or corrections. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Council member Massmann made the motion and it was seconded by Council member Kiefert. Motion carried.

The Treasurer's Report was presented by City Administrator Liden. The receipts included a deposit of \$30,429.42 for fire aid, \$60,000 for fire department equipment, and EDA deposits of \$1,984. Check number 35300 for \$60,000 to Community First National Bank for a payment on the fire truck lease was highlighted as an out of the ordinary expense as well as number 35346 to Reitrock Paving, LLC for \$6,662.50 for the work done behind the nursing home and along Bakken. Cash balance at the end of August was \$229,221.38.

Council member Kiefert motioned to approve, seconded by Council member Bosman. Motion carried.

There was no airport report.

Jon Pauna of Moore Engineering presented on behalf of Jeff Ebsch. He provided an overview of the Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) funding option through DEED as well as PFA and Rural Development. He explained the different scenarios and possibilities and discussed the next steps in the process. He then shared about the Safe Routes to School program that is available through Minnesota Department of Transportation. The program is offered yearly, and after a quick discussion with Public Works Director Nephew and Council, it was decided to look to future years due to the deadline being too close for the current funding cycle. He explained that there are bigger projects that can be funded through the programs and urged Council to look to bigger projects and to consider the Active Transportation Program grants to help with projects such as paved trails.

City Administrator Liden gave the Fair Meadow report in place of Interim Fair Meadow Administrator Sandy Larson. The quote for the grinder pumps was moved to the next meeting. Liden shared a memo about a change

in fire code that was brought to the attention of FMNH Interim Administrator Larson during the annual survey. The previous hardware was no longer allowed under the fire code and the need to rectify the situation was under strict time guidelines and did not allow for prior approval by the council. She requested approval after the fact for the update. The funds were available through the facility grant. Council member Massmann motioned to approve; Council member Bosman seconded. Motion carried.

Liden presented the health insurance quotes for FMNH for 2025 and highlighted that the rates had a 5.2% increase for the plans that were already in use by FMNH staff. She requested that Council consider increasing the amount that the facility pays towards a family plan from \$300 to \$400 as she had for City employees. Full-time employees were already offered free single coverage with additional funds towards the family plan if they chose to participate.

Council member Massmann motioned to approve the plans offered at the rates presented. Council member Kiefert seconded the motion; motion carried. Council member Kiefert motioned to approve the increase in the facility portion to \$400 towards family plan coverage for those employees who used that option. Council member Bosman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Public Works Director Kevin Nephew began his report by commenting that they were keeping busy getting ready for winter weather. Next, he addressed the replacement of the nature center roof. He had gotten two quotes for the work to be done. One quote was from Gorder Construction for \$12,500 and the price included repair of the damaged corner of the eaves on the northeast corner of the roof. The materials quote from Gorder was \$5,400 for materials from the Fertile Building Center and the remaining portion of the quote was for labor and disposal costs. The second quote was from Shawn Moser Construction for \$15,000 with the materials amount listed at \$5,000 and the remaining cost was for labor and disposal. Nephew noted that Moser could get the work done this fall and early winter while Gorder couldn't do the work until spring. Discussion was held on the current state of the roof and whether the work could wait until spring. Chris Zimmel stated that there were no leaks currently and that if the snow was kept off the roof it should be fine.

A motion was made by Council member Massmann to accept the quote from Gorder Construction for the roof work at the Nature Center. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

Council member Bosman inquired about the status of the street sweeper that was for sale. It was reported that the high bid for the sweeper didn't meet the bid reserve so it did not sell. Zimmel commented that the machine was quite old with over 8,000 hours on it and that the brakes didn't work. Nephew indicated he would reach out again to the area small town that was interested in it earlier to see if they would make an offer.

City Administrator Liden gave her City Administrator report, highlighting that she had completed quarterly reports, continued work to attempt to find an auditing firm and continued to work with the employment attorney search as the previous attorney had left her position with Pemberton and the firm no longer had the capacity to meet that need.

Chris Zimmel asked if Council could revisit a Public Works matter again. He reminded Council that he and Kevin Nephew were still interested in getting a dump trailer to assist with various tasks and that the purchase of that had been tied to the sale of the street sweeper. Since the sweeper wasn't selling, he asked Council to consider approval to purchase a dump trailer even if the sweeper didn't sell. When asked about the cost for the dump trailer that Public Works was interested in, Zimmel stated that they were interested in 14 ft. long by 8 ft. wide trailer and that the price range for those was between \$10,000 to \$12,000 for new.

After discussion of the matter, Council member Massmann made a motion to approve the purchase of a dump trailer for a maximum cost of \$12,500 including tax and licensing. The motion was seconded by Council member Bosman and was carried.

Agassiz Environmental Learning Center report was given. Haunted Trails were underway and the attendance was really good for the first two weekends. The annual Jack-o-lantern Walk was scheduled for October 24th and 25th.

The Fire Department report was given by Council member Bosman. There was one call for a grass fire.

Under old business, Administrator Liden shared her memo to council explaining that the Agassiz Environmental Learning Center addition project bids came in substantially higher than the funds that would have been available from the Polk County ARPA funds and the deadline was December 31, 2024 to complete the project to receive those funds. With the costs exceeding the funds available, she asked Council to formally put the project on hold for the foreseeable future. Council member Kiefer motioned to put the project on hold indefinitely, Council member Massmann seconded the motion; motion carried.

New Business was introduced with the 2025 liquor license renewal request from Administrator Liden. She requested that the Council consider renewing all the current licenses as they were, with the assumption that the businesses would wish to continue.

Council member Massmann motioned to approve the usual various liquor license permits for Wine & Spirits, The Other Place, Side Street Bar & Grill, and Erickson's Smokehouse. Council member Kiefert seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Administrator Liden directed Council towards the information in their council packet for the land acquisition agreement for the property labeled as Parcel #9 adjacent to the airport and asked that Council approve the grant agreement with MNDOT Aeronautics and pass the resolution to proceed with the project. Council member Kiefert motioned to approve the grant agreement with MNDOT Aeronautics. Council member Bosman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Council member Massmann motioned to approve Resolution #10-1-24 giving authorization to the Mayor and City Administrator to sign the grant agreement. Council member Kiefert seconded. Motion carried.

Administrator Liden shared that the Agassiz Environmental Learning Center board had met in September and had passed a motion to give their written intent to renew the contract with the City of Fertile for an additional 30 years as outlined in the original contract. The current contract was set to expire in March of 2025. Council member Bosman motioned to approve the renewal and Council member Massmann seconded. Motion carried.

Under announcements, it was noted that the next regular meeting would be held on November 12th due to the Veteran's Day observance on the regularly scheduled day of November 11th.

Council member Kiefert motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:11pm. Council member Massmann seconded the motion.



Daniel Wilkens, Mayor



Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator