

WEEKLY MEMO

Date: January 27, 2012

To: Mayor Lynn Stauss, Council President Craig Buckalew, Vice President Wayne Gregoire, Council Members Marc Demers, Ron Vonasek, Henry Tweten, Greg Leigh, and Mike Pokrzywinski.

From: Scott Huizenga

RE: Weekly Update

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

February 7, 2012 – 5:00 pm – Council Meeting – Council Chambers

February 14, 2012 – 5:00 pm – Work Session – Training Room

February 21, 2012 – 5:00 pm – Council Meeting – Council Chambers

February 28, 2012 – 5:00 pm – Work Session – Training Room

WEEKLY UPDATE:

City receives energy study grant

The Minnesota Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERT) recently announced its 2012 seed grant recipients, of which East Grand Forks was a recipient. From the press release:

Ice Arenas Energy Study – City of East Grand Forks

East Grand Forks, MN – As part of its broader city-wide sustainability initiatives to improve energy conservation, cost savings, and healthy lifestyles, the City of East Grand Forks is performing a comprehensive energy study for three indoor ice arenas: the East Grand Forks Civic Arena, the East Grand Forks VFW Arena, and the East Grand Forks Blue Line Arena. The study will determine the most significant power consuming items of each arena building, and the annual energy savings possible if systems are upgraded to energy efficient equipment. The study will involve inspections of the buildings' envelope, the ice making systems, lighting and HVAC systems. With this study, the City of East Grand Forks can make an informed decision as to what potential renovations will best benefit the community and contribute to the City's overall sustainability program. (Research: Feasibility Study; \$3,000)

The entire press release can be found at: <http://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/blog/certs-announces-2012-seed-grant-recipients-across-minnesota>.

Compensation study starts next week

The City next week will begin its review of its Job Classification and Compensation Plan. The study, performed by Springsted, Inc, will review existing job classifications to note any changes since the last review. Also, the study includes a market study to compare our salaries and benefits versus public and private sector comparable employers. The goal of the study is to establish an updated framework for future wage and benefits decisions. It is standard practice in most organizations to update their plans every 5-7 years. While the City finally adopted a uniform compensation plan two years, the adopted job classification plan was already five years

in the making at that time. Therefore, the plan is now nearly seven years old and is in need of a review.

On a related note, the City submitted its Pay Equity and Comparable Worth report to the State of Minnesota for final review. The report is due every three years, and the implementation report appears to show very positive results for the city's pay plan. There was one minor change from earlier versions of the report, which was the addition of a then-vacant Parks Foreman position. The addition did not change the city's compliance.

Legislative Update

Legislators introduced several more bills that affect cities this week. One of the most significant is HF 1911 that would reinstitute levy limits in cities across Minnesota. The bills' primary sponsors are Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston), the House Tax Committee Chair, and Rep. Linda Runbeck (R-Circle Pines), the House Property and Local Tax Division Chair. The bill would allow no more than a 1.9 percent property tax levy increase at the local (not including mandated debt and retirement obligations) for FY 2013 and thereafter. Any additional increase would require voter approval. The overall provisions are similar to the previous rounds of levy limits except that there does not appear to be an expiration to the provision. In the past, Rep. Davids has been somewhat sympathetic to Greater Minnesota, and he has generally opposed levy limits. Early indications are that he is more amenable to levy limits this year because, as the argument goes, local governments (Cities, Counties, Townships) increased their levies by greater amounts than was cut by the state from the Market Value Homestead Credit (MVHC). That argument, of course, ignores four straight years of Local Government Aid cuts along with declining revenues in LGA for the last decade. The City's chief argument against levy limits is simply a matter of local control. Local officials know their constituents best; and they should be allowed to make local decisions on behalf of their constituents.

Other notable bills introduced this week include HF 1954 and HF 1949. HF 1954 would require cities with populations greater than 2500 generally to publish electronically budget data by line item at least the last four years. The bill provides alternative mechanisms for cities that do not have web sites. This should not be a huge burden to East Grand Forks because we have published a full budget document online since 2008. Nonetheless, the continued overreach by state officials is troubling. Finally, HF 1949 would create a "Truth in Taxation Task Force" of various legislative, city, county, and township officials to review and recommend improvements to information contained on annual Truth in Taxation statements.

Administration Update

The Admin and Finance office will begin recruitment next week to fill the current vacancy. The recruitment will be listed as classified a vacant secretary position.

Reminder: the City Council will not meet on Tuesday, January 31.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Police Department, Chief Mike Hedlund

EGFPD Officers Conduct Cold Weather/Night Shooting Exercise

Officers of the East Grand Forks Police Department are taking part in an in-house firearms training exercise at the Department's firearms range. The exercise involves the officers firing both their duty handguns and police carbine rifles from a variety of stations. The exercise takes place outside and at night so that officers get experience shooting under difficult, but very realistic, conditions.

EGFPD Receives Radar Unit from MN Office of Traffic Safety

The East Grand Forks Police Department has been selected by the MN Office of Traffic Safety to receive a new Stalker DSR2X radar system. The system is provided to the department in recognition of their participation in a variety of traffic safety programs. The system will replace an older, less effective version and will be installed in one of the department's squad cars.

Fire Department, Chief Randy Gust

The Fire Department did receive a grant for \$35,335 from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. The Federal Government share is \$33,569 and the cities share would be \$1,766. This grant will purchase hose and nozzles that are in need of replacement along with a new skid unit to fight grass fires. We have been very successful obtaining grants thru this program and have received \$52,729 in 2008, \$26,092 in 2009 and \$102,141 in 2010 for a total of \$215,297 in the last 4 years. We will continue to seek out and apply for all alternative funding available.

I want to thank the Council Members and Mayor for their support of the funding needed to purchase a new Aerial Platform Truck. We will work hard on making sure that the truck we purchase is right for the City. We will be traveling to Clintonville WI. In the near future to inspect the Seagrave truck that was shown at the last Work Session.

Library, Charlotte Helgeson

Kraus Andersen, Braun and the EGF Roof committee will meet Feb 14th at 10:30 a.m. for a presentation report of findings and to discuss the next steps. Information gathered will be shared at the work session on the same date.

Parks and Recreation, Dave Aker

1. The signs for the Civic Center are working; Corey was able to hook us up with the program.
2. The outdoor skating rinks are open.
3. The Blue Line members were able to hang the banners at the Civic Center.
4. The Northern Star Competition went really well at the rinks.
5. The rule for boarding, hit to the head and checking from behind went into effect last week.