

WEEKLY MEMO

Date: February 22, 2013

To: Mayor Lynn Stauss. Council President Craig Buckalew, Vice President Greg Leigh, Council Members Clarence Vetter, Ron Vonasek, Henry Tweten, Mark Olstad, and Chad Grassel

From: Scott Huizenga

RE: Weekly Update

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Work Session – February 26, 2013 – 5:00 PM – Training Room

Waste Water Public Forum – March 4, 2013 – 7:00 PM – Council Chambers

Regular Meeting – March 5, 2013 – 5:00 PM – Council Chambers

Work Session – March 12, 2013 – 5:00 PM – Training Room

Regular Council Meeting – March 19, 2013 – 5:00 PM Council Chambers

Legislative Conference – March 21, 2013 – St. Paul – Crown Plaza

Work Session – March 26, 2013 – 5:00 PM – Training Room

WEEKLY UPDATE:

Mayor, Council meets with MPCA

Mayor Stauss and some Council members along with staff met with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) in Detroit Lakes on Thursday. The topic was the proposed waste water treatment project. Several items were addressed including the timing of proposed improvements, the capacity of the existing facility, and the viability of a “water balance” test to determine alleged seepage rates at the current lagoon.

The MPCA expects a final progress report from the City on March 22. This date was amended from the previous deadline of February 22. The progress report should include a proposed schedule of design and construction for a new facility. The MPCA did not indicate that the City had to choose a project by next month. Nicole Blasing, Pollution Control Specialist, said that the MPCA expects to see in the final progress report that the City is “committed” to upgrading its treatment facility in a prescribed time line, presumably to coincide with the current facility permit expiration in 2016.

The MPCA presented a brief list of facilities in communities similar in size to East Grand Forks. Mechanical treatment was the predominant method of most peer cities. MPCA staff said the mechanical option was as much a function of land availability land as it was the effectiveness of treatment. The parties discussed water balance testing in some depth. A water balance test, at its most basic level, involves the placement of water barrels in the treatment facility to determine seepage. One can calculate with high accuracy the amount of overall seepage from a lagoon facility based on the inflow and release of water from the barrels. The advantage of a water balance test is that the City would know with relative certainty whether or not the current facility is in compliance. The disadvantage of conducting

such a test, in addition to the cost of the test, is that the City could face an accelerated design and construction schedule if the current lagoon facility is determined to be non-compliant.

The group also discussed the capacity of the current facility. The waste water treatment pond is at 89 percent of total capacity even if everything else is compliant. As such, the City is limited in its ability to grow or to attract business and industry without substantial improvements. Finally, the topic of affordability was raised briefly. Most state and federal grant programs require a community to establish waste water rates at 1.5 percent of annual median household income in order to be eligible for grant funding. This translates to approximately \$66 per month for East Grand Forks. The current rate for an average household is \$29. Similarly, the City received a coincidental, but unrelated, message from the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority (PFA) on Thursday afternoon. PFA confirmed that the City is not currently eligible for grant funding or for a 30-year loan term for waste water improvements. The City remains eligible for a 20-year loan at a historically low rate. The City Council is expected to meet for its second Waste Water Public Forum on Monday, March 4 at 7:00 pm. The public is encouraged to attend.

Police Headquarters Update

I authorized Legend Technical Services to proceed with mold testing of the Police Headquarters facility based upon input at Tuesday's City Council meeting. Staff will return to the City Council at a subsequent meeting with a revised recommendation, if applicable, regarding the proposed Police Headquarters renovation project.

Legislative Update

Tax bills have been introduced in both legislative chambers that represent Governor Dayton's budget proposals. The changes include broadening the base of the state sales tax while reducing the overall sales tax rate, creating a 4th-tier income tax for high-income filers, and increasing several other fees and surcharges. The Governor's LGA proposal at this time includes an \$80 million increase to the program statewide. Greater Minnesota would actually lose over \$3 million in net LGA funding in 2014 despite the statewide increase due to changes in the formula. East Grand Forks would lose over \$1 million annually. Governor Dayton has repeated that he is open to alternatives to the proposed formula.

The legislature also will consider changes to the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA), primarily for public safety personnel. Both the employee and employer contributions to pensions would increase for police and fire employees. The employee contribution would increase from 9.6 percent to 10.2 percent of salary in 2014, and 10.8 percent thereafter. The employer contribution would increase from 14.4 percent to 15.3 percent in 2014, and 16.2 percent thereafter. The League of Minnesota Cities advocates changing these percentages so that the burden of additional cost falls equally on employees and public employers. The bill would also increase vesting requirements, and would limit cost-of-living adjustments to pension payments until the overall PERA fund is funded at least 90 percent for at least two years in a row. Last Monday's [Cities Bulletin](#) has more information.

Finally, both the House and Senate later will consider bills that would provide funding to cities with public safety personnel called overseas on military leave. Cities could request reimbursement if it either had to hire additional personnel or incur additional overtime costs to cover the cost of a police officer or fire fighter who is called to active duty.

Intergovernmental Retreat

On Friday afternoon, the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce will host the annual Intergovernmental Retreat with representatives from the City, Polk County, East Grand Forks School District, and Northland College. State and federal representatives from our area also will attend. The event runs from 11:30-4:00 at the Boardwalk Bar and Grill. Later, Representative Deb Kiel will host a public forum at the VFW at 5:00.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

TEAMS off to Regionals

Congratulations to all the youth teams and their coaches that are headed to Regionals next week. The **Bantam A's** are going to Warroad for Regionals after they took 1st place in the Districts. **Bantam B** team is going to Crookston after finishing second in their District Tournament. **Pee Wee A** go to Two Harbors after taking second place in the Districts. **Pee Wee B** team is headed to Silver Bay after a third place finish in their District tournament. **12U** team goes to Brainerd after their third place finish and the **14U** team goes to Roseau with an automatic seed into the Regionals.

Compressor at the Civic Center

We are extremely happy to say the compressor at the Civic Center is up and running. Ten days ago the compressor went down and we had American Industrial Refrigeration from Plymouth, MN come up and replace the old Frick compressor with the Vilter compressor we had in waiting. We started out with a snow storm and finished with a snow storm but still got the compressor going. I would like to thank Midwest Refrigeration, Eagle Electric, Ron Bubendorf, Kevin Hanson, Alex Barta and Brian Larson for their hard work along with A.I.R.

SNOW REMOVAL

You could say we are the other guys that are removing snow. We have been extremely busy moving snow at City Hall, downtown, library, arenas, sidewalks, outdoor ice rinks and bike paths. There are special events such as the Iceman Triathlon down on the Greenway in town this weekend. Snowmobilers are suppose to use caution and give the racers plenty of room on Saturday, February 23, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

SECTIONS START

Section 8 begins the quarterfinals Thursday for the higher seed teams. They move to East Grand Forks Civic Center on Saturday for the semi-finals and the following Thursday, February 28, is the Championship game. Let's get out and cheer the GREENWAVE to victory!

Police Department, Chief Mike Hedlund

EGFPD Bike Patrol

The East Grand Forks Police Department has begun to take steps to form a bike patrol that will begin operation later this year. Officers for the patrol will be selected from the existing staff and will receive specialized training prior to working on the bikes. Bicycles and other related equipment will need to be purchased to get the program started. A number of local businesses have stepped forward to offer their financial support for this program. The bike patrol will involve officers using the bikes to enhance community interaction as well as working special events, patrolling the city's parks and bike paths, and conducting additional crime prevention duties. Officers on bikes can be very effective at responding to specific types of crime problems such as vehicle break-ins.

Public Works, Jason Stordahl

Streets- Staff has cleared snow from all streets and alleys. They are now working on widening streets curb to curb, hauling away banks around intersections and cul-de-sacs.

Wastewater-We had a meeting with MPCA on Thursday Feb.21st to discuss our current wastewater facility and upgrades that may have to be done. Council members that were unable to attend can feel free to stop by the Public Works office, to discuss details of the meeting.

Storm water- The new gate well shaft for Lift 16 is not finished yet, but we are hoping that it will be done and delivered any day now.

Fire Department, Chief Gary Larson

Snow removal has taken up plenty of time this week.

We are looking at getting away from Firehouse Software and going with State recommended Image Trend. The Fire Marshal's office would like to see all Fire Departments change over. It should save us some money.

We had the annual meeting with the rural townships this Tuesday. We discussed purchasing GPS units for vehicles, 800 mghz radios, ISO Rating, and possibly some new rural maps.

Agenda Items:

- The City Engineer will present bid results for 2013 City Project No. 2 – Watermain and Forcemain Improvements. The project funding is a combination of waste water and water funds. The total bid price is \$657,916.15, almost \$80,000 over the engineering estimate. The force main portion of the work is an extension of a 2010 Water Main project on 10th Street NW. The City installed a new sewer main in that area while the street already was excavated for water improvements. The new main was not connected at the time. This project would connect the new main to the existing waste water system. The force main addition – as opposed to the current gravity main on 10th Street NW, should alleviate much of the odor issues in that area at least before the master lift station.

- The City Council will discuss options for swimming pool renovation. Staff from Ballard King and Associates, OLC Design, and EAPC will be available via conference call to answer questions as needed. The consultants seek direction from the Council regarding a final proposed project so that they can complete the final feasibility report.
- The Parks and Recreation Superintendent will discuss the City's arena rental policy. The City Council raised concerns at a previous work session regarding the city's rental rates relative to private businesses and clubs for receptions. Staff will review and seek input on rental rates for events, including receptions, ice rentals, sporting events, and other activities as appropriate.
- The Public Works Director will present a revised snow emergency ordinance for Council review. The City Council discussed at the last work session the possibility of increasing the City's snow emergency activation to four inches of snowfall rather than two inches. The increase may result in slight cost savings to if crews are not called in on overtime for minor events of less than four inches. Additionally, the Police Department would issue fewer tickets for events that many do not deem emergencies. Response time to snow events, especially in non-peak, non-business hours may be delayed in lighter snow events.