

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE
WASTEWATER PUBLIC FORUM
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2013 - 7:00 P.M.**

Mayor and all council present

Meeting convened at 7:00 pm

Staff present: Karla Anderson, Finance Director; Brad Bail, City Engineer; Greg Boppre, City Engineer; Scott Huizenga, City Administrator; Megan Nelson, Executive Assistant; and Jason Stordahl, Public Works Director.

Council President Buckalew started the meeting at 7:00 pm and asked Mr. Huizenga to proceed. Mr. Huizenga informed everyone this meeting will be addressing questions that were asked at the last wastewater forum, give the council an overview of projects, and give updated costs.

Mr. Stordahl began by reviewing a timeline of what is happened and a possibility for completing the wastewater project. Beginning in 2012 the city received the Alleged Violation Letter from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Issues the MPCA would like the city to address include rip rap, capacity, fencing, and leaking of the ponds. Currently the ponds are functioning at 89% capacity and it has been estimated that within about 6 years they will be at 95% capacity at which time MPCA will require the city to complete an upgrade of its waste water treatment. Council member Leigh asked if there has ever been testing done around pond and what the results were if they had been testing completed. Mr. Boppre informed the council there hadn't been testing of the soil around the ponds but there was testing at the drainage tile that was installed in 2008. The samples taken from the drain tiles have always met the standards.

Mr. Stordahl reminded the council the city has until March 22, 2013 to send a response letter informing the MPCA how the city will proceed with plans for future waste water treatment. If the city has come up with a plan by June, we can submit a bonding proposal to the state to help fund the project. He continued with a tentative schedule of beginning to put together plans and specifications for the project the council plans on moving forward with by November 2014. By November 2015 MPCA will require that 80% of the plans and specifications be completed. In 2016 the city will apply for a new NPDES permit and in order for the city to qualify they will have 80% of the plans and specifications completed by November 2015. By 2016-2018 construction of the project the council picks could take place.

Council member Tweten stated years ago soap contained lots of phosphorus which caused lots of issues. That has since changed but now we have one state agency requires our water treatment plant to add phosphorus for water purification and another state agency is requiring that phosphorus is removed in waste water treatment. Somehow the state agencies need to get on the same page. Mr. Boppre agreed with Council member Tweten and added until these agencies change their policies the city has to comply with both requirements.

Mr. Stordahl also added that if the city does not respond to the MPCA they will force the city to complete a water balance test. Mayor Stauss asked what is wrong with completing this test. If the ponds aren't leaking more than the amount allowed the council could wait a few more years before moving forward with a wastewater project. Mr. Huizenga pointed out the city may have more to lose than gain by completing a water balance test. If the city is out of compliance then instead of taking the time and becoming educated about the possible options, the city would then be on a time table set up by the MPCA and would have to move forward right away. Mr. Bail also pointed out that once the ponds reach 95% capacity the MPCA will stop the city's growth until the wastewater treatment has been addressed.

Mr. Bail continued the presentation by explaining how even trying to complete little fixes now could create a situation of affecting the structure of the ponds which MPCA would then require the city to address the wastewater treatment according to a timeline set up by MPCA. He went on to explain how a water balance test could be completed in the secondary pond and with difficulty in the primary pond. Even though the test could be done, the results might be inconclusive. Council member Olstad asked how MPCA can require a water balance test to be completed even if they don't know how the test could be done. Mr. Boppre said that we are the ones would have to prove the ponds aren't leaking more than allowed so the city would have to submit a proposal that would have to be approved by the MPCA before proceeding with the test.

After Mr. Bail had finished Mr. Boppre showed a diagram of a potential mechanical treatment plant the city could choose to proceed with. The estimate included a rather extensive breakdown of costs. Council member Tweten said that there needed to be a breakdown of what the 35% contingency was for and that it is too high. Mr. Boppre informed the council he was trying to keep everything uniformed and use the data which was recommended. The breakdown would be 15% for engineering, 5% for administrative costs, 5% for legal costs, and 10% for contingency. Mr. Huizenga added that at this point nothing has been designed and many things will be changing including the amount of contingency.

Ms. Anderson presented the most up-to-date costs for reconstructing the ponds, building a mechanical plant, and the interconnect project to Grand Forks. The breakdowns were done by 20 year and 30 year loans including the decommissioning of the ponds and not decommissioning the ponds at 5% interest. Council member Buckalew asked if the operational costs were included for the amount of a mechanical treatment plant. He was assured that it was. Mr. Boppre and Mr. Huizenga also explained the Cost of Service Analysis that was completed which was being passed around. This includes the tentative costs for the city if they decided to move forward with the interconnect project with Grand Forks.

Mr. Stordahl continued with a list of pros and cons of each of the three proposed projects. A pond system would be easy to maintain, have low operational costs, and the system could last a long time. Some issues that might come up are the fact that we are unsure of future MPCA regulations and don't know how many new industrial users could be added to the system. A mechanical plant system would have perpetual treatment, the processes could be modified, and there were be the capability of taking on more industrial users. Some downsides are the operational and labor costs along with having to add on in the future. Lastly the interconnect with Grand Forks would take care of treatment and give East Grand Forks the ability to add more

users. Downsides to this would be possible future ND regulations, future Grand Forks plant expansions, and future negotiated fees for treatment.

After some more discussion Mr. Calvin Tininenko was asked to speak. Mr. Tininenko informed the council he is a microbiologist and has been working in the wastewater field since 1972. He has had experience with many different types of facilities all around the country. He gave his opinion on the three proposed projects the city is currently looking at. He also told the council about another type of mechanical plant that could possibly produce fertilizer that the city could sell depending on what is all in the water. Mr. Tininenko stated that the simpler of a mechanical system the city chose would be better since it would be easier to add on to. More questions followed by the council and mayor.

Mr. Strandell asked if the cost of the upgrade to the Grand Forks facility was included in the costs presented. Mr. Boppre said they had been included with the figures presented during the meeting. Mr. Strandell stated he didn't like how this would be a continuous cost.

The meeting finished up by discussing what all needs to be included in the response letter that will be sent back to the MPCA. Council member Vetter stated he thinks that the council needs to move forward because this project is going to take a long time to complete. Council member Tweten added the council needs to take a serious look at a fourth option Mr. Tininenko was talking about. Mr. Huizenga told the council that they will need to decide on a timeline. If they are comfortable with the timeline that was presented they can surely stick with that. Also the council will need to decide if a water balance test is to be completed and lastly something to keep in mind is that if a project is chosen by June they could send a proposal for the bonding bill for the following year.

The meeting ended at 8:44 pm.