

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE CITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, JULY 23, 2013 - 5:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for July 23, 2013 was called to order by Council President Craig Buckalew at 5:02 P.M.

CALL OF ROLL:

On a Call of Roll the following members of the East Grand Forks City Council were present: Mayor Lynn Stauss, Council President Craig Buckalew, Council Members Clarence Vetter, Ron Vonasek, Henry Tweten, Mark Olstad, and Chad Grassel.

Dave Aker, Parks & Recreation Superintendent; Karla Anderson, Finance Director; Brad Bail, City Engineer; Mark Dragich, Recreation Supervisor; Nancy Ellis, City Planner; Ron Galstad, City Attorney; Mike Hedlund, Police Chief; Charlotte Helgeson, Library Director; Gary Larson, Fire Chief; Karl Lindquist, Interim City Administrator; Megan Nelson, Executive Assistant; Jim Richter, EDHA Director; and Jason Stordahl, Public Works Director.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:

The Council President Determined a Quorum was present

1. Transit Route Changes & Designated Stops – Nancy Ellis

Ms. Ellis informed the council that Cities Area Transit had been reviewing recommendations and pickups to make route changes in both East Grand Forks and Grand Forks. She stated how the council would only need to look at routes 10 and 11 since they were the only routes going through East Grand Forks. She stated the couple changes that were going to be made were based on pickups and places where stops need to be added like at the side of the Good Samaritan Senior Center. She explained how the bus shelter at Hugo's is going to be moved to a place where it will be utilized since the riders wait in the entrance of Hugo's. Ms. Ellis added how there was a request to have early start times and it was estimated to cost approximately \$9400. She explained East Grand Forks would have to cover about 20% of that cost but there might be more commuters and it was something that was being looked at. Council member Vetter stated on number 10 there were three shelters shown on the map and asked if there were other designated stops. Ms. Ellis said there was and they will be marked with a sign stating it is a stop and have a bus schedule so the riders will know the next time the bus will be by. Mr. Lindquist asked if there is going to be a bus stop on the south side of Sherlock Park. Ms. Ellis stated there was and the map will be changed showing that stop. Council President Buckalew asked why the stop is the door at Hugo's. Ms. Ellis stated it was easier for riders to wait there with their

groceries instead of hauling them to the side of the parking lot and how it was warmer in during the winter months. There were no more questions.

2. Credit Card Purchasing System – Karla Anderson

Ms. Anderson informed the council in the spring of 2012 the City started excepting credit cards for payments and added how well that has gone. She then asked if the council would allow the departments to transition to credit cards for some purchases since places are not accepting purchase orders anymore. She stated that this would not only be cards but a system that could be utilized. She explained how department heads would have to sign in and approve purchases, how using these cards can be more restrictive than using purchase orders, and it would cut down on the amount of checks the City would have to send out. Ms. Anderson further explained how it is going to be a lot of work to move forward with this system and wanted the council on board before moving any farther forward with this. Mayor Stauss said he thought it was a good idea. Council President Buckalew asked if there would be an electronic record. Ms. Anderson stated receipts would still have to be turned in when the purchases are made. She went on to explain what restrictions can be placed on the cards such as how much can be spent, where the card can be used at, and what the card can be used for. Council President Buckalew asked if it was going to be considered a debit or credit card. Ms. Anderson said it would be a credit card. Council member Vonasek asked if it would be used for gas and how that would be monitored. Ms. Anderson mentioned she might try and get a different card so the City wouldn't have to pay the tax on the gas and keep a mileage sheet in the City vehicles. Council member Olstad asked what the fee will be and if the City would have to send an ACH file or if it would be an automatic deduction. Ms. Anderson explained how there would not be a fee for the City to use this system and how the vendor would be paid right away with the option for the department head or council to disallow a purchase. Mr. Galstad stated the state allows these kinds of things but there would have to be an itemized invoice to make the purchase valid. Ms. Nelson explained how there would be an electronic statement showing the council the purchases to go along with the check register for the council to approve when paying bills so the council would still have the final say with these transactions.

3. CAFR Presentation – Karla Anderson

Ms. Anderson informed the council that if they had any questions on the Water and Light Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) they would have to ask Mr. Boyce. She gave a brief overview of the Water and Light CAFR stating how there was an increase in water sales by about 2.3 million gallons, how electric went up some also, and gave a brief overview of the increase in Water and Light assets.

Ms. Anderson then proceeded to give an overview of the City's CAFR. She informed the council there was a decrease of .8% in the City's net position, long term liability increased with the issuance of bonds in 2012, and the percentage of unassigned funds had risen to 39%. Ms. Anderson explained how in both 2011 and 2010 unassigned funds were at 31% and how it is now recommended to have up to 42% in reserves. She explained this is being looked at when budgeting and with LGA possibly increasing this might be easier to accomplish. She then gave a brief overview of expenses and the increase in revenue from operating grants. Mayor Stauss

asked if the 42% of unassigned reserves was a recommendation from the auditors or the state because having that much in reserves might hurt the City when we are asking for help with funding for major projects. Ms. Anderson explained how the state asks that cities have at least 5 months of expenses in reserves but next year that might change. Council member Tweten commented on how cities use to keep low balances because they would lose LGA if they had too much in reserve but reminded council how important it is now to have reserves. Council member Vetter asked how much longer the City is under contract with Brady Martz. Ms. Anderson stated she wasn't sure but would look into it. Council member Vetter stated the current best practice is to change auditing firms every 5 to 10 years so when our time is up we should put this out for bids. Mr. Lindquist stated how hard Karla worked on the CAFR; how she had some help from auditors, and had a good result. He thanked Ms. Anderson for her hard work.

4. Trespass Ordinance – Karl Lindquist

Mr. Lindquist asked the council what they would like him to do regarding the trespass ordinance. He asked if the signs that are currently there should be changed. Mayor Stauss said he could understand the issue but asked if the ordinance wouldn't apply to the entire levee system if it was passed. Council member Olstad asked if it could only apply to the area where there are issues. Mr. Lindquist stated that instead of passing an ordinance the City can utilize Minnesota statutes regarding trespassing. Mr. Galstad stated how in the Maplewood addition the City only has an easement where the levee runs through, the property owners still own the land so it is considered trespassing when people walk on that portion of the levee. He stated that in other communities educate the public on what is private property and what isn't. He suggested there should be a map showing the location of the private property and make people aware they can be ticketed if they trespass. Mr. Lindquist said he might try and clean up the ordinance regarding motorized vehicles on the levee system and how he will work with Public Works to put up no trespassing signs.

5. Memorandum of Agreement with AFSCME Council 65 – Karl Lindquist

Mr. Lindquist explained this memorandum of agreement was to finalize Ms. Ellis position of City Planner joining the AFSCME bargaining group. He stated how a meeting was held with Ms. Knudson, Ms. Ellis, the AFSCME representative, and himself to discuss this agreement. He informed the council that the benefits and pay will be the same as Ms. Ellis is getting right now.

6. North End Park – Henry Tweten

Council member Tweten asked to be moved to the end of the meeting.

7. Swimming Pool Property – Mark Olstad

Council member Olstad stated he wanted to inform the council about the property the City swimming pool is located on. He gave a brief overview of the confusion when it comes to knowing who is the property owner really is, not wanting to improve the swimming pool if the City wasn't the owner, and the investigation that followed. He explained how the county had looked into this matter and found that the deed had not been recorded correctly and after more

digging they are very confident this property belongs to the City. He added that in 30 days that information will be known for sure and the deed will also be recorded correctly. Council President Buckalew asked if there was a title opinion given. Mr. Lindquist stated there was no abstract so the deed had to be pulled and no title opinion could be given.

8. Future of 2nd Avenue NE – City Council

Mr. Lindquist started by saying at the last work session the council members were asked to take a look at 2nd Avenue NE and come with ideas of what to do with this road. Council member Tweten stated the City will have spent lots of money on 15th Street and 17th Street. He went on to say that 2nd Avenue NE is mud hole and needs drainage. He made suggestions like having a modified curb or have it redone like the street behind Frandsen Bank. Mayor Stauss said he thinks it is more important to repair the Civic Center Parking lot instead of repairing 2nd Avenue NE. Council President Buckalew stated that this street functions more like an alley than a through street. Discussion followed about how prioritization of projects and if this street is high on that list of projects to have completed. Council President Buckalew asked to have this matter placed on the agenda for the next council meeting for a vote on how to proceed with this street.

Mr. Galstad asked to make sure there were only businesses on this stretch of road or if there are residents living somewhere along this road. Ms. Ellis stated at one time someone was living there but this area is zoned for commercial on the first floor with a residence being allowed on the second floor. She explained a few years ago there were letters sent out and this issue was brought to the City Administrator but didn't move forward from there. She stated she will look into this matter and if there is a zoning violation she will bring this issue back to the City Administrator's attention.

Mr. Galstad asked if the council is going to hold a public hearing or order plans and specs for this road. Mr. Lindquist asked how the council would like to move forward. Mr. Bail stated how estimated costs could be prepared instead of plans and specifications. Mr. Richter stated the last time this project came up there was an overwhelming no to move forward with this from the property owners. Council member Vonasek said to put this up to a vote to proceed and if it passes then start to move forward. Council President Buckalew asked if this even was a street. Ms. Ellis stated it was but parts of this street have been vacated. Council President Buckalew stated the council will vote on completing a feasibility study for 2nd Avenue NE at the next council meeting.

9. Springbrook Training – Karl Lindquist

Mr. Lindquist explained how he had heard many complaints about Springbrook, the software system the City uses for business. He stated he understands there are issues but also knows there has been a lack of training. He thanked Mr. Boyce for arranging training from Springbrook which he said was being paid for by the Water and Light Department. Mr. Lindquist asked the council to budget funds for training every year for staff.

North End Park – Henry Tweten

Henry Tweten started the discussion by stating he had discussed the new north end park with both Collin Peterson and LeRoy Stumpf. According to Tweten, the park will be a Natural Resource Learning Center and will contain books and slides and will furtherance the teaching of the sciences. Tweten said he had talked to the Minnesota DNR and that they were excited about the park. The Federal wildlife people were excited about the new park too.

Tweten observed that science teachers, especially biology teachers, would come to the park and take notes about native flowers and grasses. They would use that information to teach more extensive classes. Tweten said the new park could be funded by the Minnesota Legacy Fund and the DNR. He also pointed out that the City had lost a lot of park land to the flood, and needed to replace that. Tweten said he had talked to a Professor emeritus at UND, and the professor had offered to help by writing grants.

Tweten said he had planned on setting up a non-profit corporation to help sell the City lots in the north end and the south end of town, and that building a new park in the north end will make that area more attractive and will help sell lots. Tweten said, “Families that play together stay together.” According to Tweten, the unsold lots in the north end cost the City \$100,000 per year in special assessments and that money would go a long way toward rebuilding the swimming pool. The lots in the south end cost the City \$34,000 per year.

Tweten said he would like to take Dave and Mark to St. Cloud to look at flower gardens. According to Tweten, there are two very outstanding flower gardens in St. Cloud. He would also like to take Dave and Mark to Moorhead and Fargo to look at parks and flower gardens in those communities. Tweten wants to create an ad hoc committee composed of Chad, Craig, Greg, Brad, Chip Shae, Jim Scanlon, and Dan Klug from the college. They would create a hybrid park. Dave Aker was called upon to discuss what the park would have to offer and Aker said pickleball fields, sand volleyball, soccer, horseshoes, and games like that.

Mayor Lynn Stauss asked whether Tweten was talking about the old dump site. Tweten said he was and that the old dump site was about 9 1/2 acres, and that he wanted to add more land and bring the new park up to about 21 acres in total. Tweten said another source of money would be to sell shelters and flower gardens for naming rights. This isn’t like instant jell-o,” Tweten said. Tweten also said the park would bring people into town and that it would be good for business. “If it does nothing more than sell lots,” Tweten said, “It will be worth it.”

Dave Aker said that in the last three years the City had spent \$70,000 on parks, and that Grand Forks is spending \$640,000 to upgrade its parks. Clarence Vetter said that the City needs to upgrade all of its parks, and that a 20 acre park would require a lot of upkeep. “This is the wrong time for a new park,” Vetter said. (At this time Vetter left the meeting).

Mayor Lynn Stauss said the parks need more benches for people to sit on, and that he wasn’t sure the new park would help sell lots. “The golf course hasn’t helped us sell lots,” the Mayor said. “Until we can take care of the parks we have, it will be difficult to proceed with a new park.” Tweten asked the Mayor, “What’s your idea on selling lots?”

Mark Olstad asked Tweten, "What are the expected operating costs for the new park? Twenty acres is a lot of land to take care of." Tweten replied that the new park will be 21 acres and that the old Sherlock Park was bigger than that. Karla Anderson asked, "How large is O'Leary Park?" Tweten replied, "I'm not sure what the acreage is." Dave Aker said O'Leary Park was about 22 acres, and that the park needed "aged" equipment for kids from 1 - 3 years, from 3 - 6 years, like that. (At this time Mayor Lynn Stauss left the meeting). Craig Buckalew asked how many acres of park were located within the City. Nancy Ellis replied that the Transportation Plan should give the number of parks and the size in acres for each park in the City.

Chad Grassel said it was his understanding that part of the process of planning a new park was to get the concept on paper so it could be shown to potential lots purchasers as a future goal. Grassel said the park wouldn't be built overnight, that it was something for the future, and that it won't happen tomorrow. Grassel also said that the soccer program in East Grand Forks was booming and that if the City was going to promote growth it would need a park in this area, and that the closest park to this area at the present time was Nash Park.

Tweten said that the City should be able to attract 25 new families in single family dwellings per year, and that each new child would generate \$8,000 per year in state aid to schools. To upgrade all the parks, according to Tweten, would help stabilize and maintain property values.

Brad Bail said he had designed many parks, and that the City would need a park plan before it could approach the DNR for grants. Buckalew said, "I'm more in favor of finding out what we have and what we need before we start planning for a new park. Grassel said that one of Jim Scanlon's fears is that he will have to share a ball field with Sacred Heart, and that no one had ever talked about a water park in the new park. But it was a good idea to let Brad layout the new park so people could see what was going to be built in the future.

Tweten said that so far this year the City had issued building permits for 12 single family homes. If this new park doesn't sell lots, how will the City do it. Tweten said he was concerned. When discussion was over, President Buckalew ordered the Clerk to move the planning of the new park on to the next regular meeting agenda.

ADJOURN:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER GRASSEL, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER VONASEK, TO ADJOURN THE JULY 23, 2013 SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 6:30 P.M.

Voting Aye: Grassel, Vetter, Vonasek, Buckalew, Tweten, and Olstad.

Voting Nay: None.

Absent: Leigh.

Karl Lindquist, Interim City Administrator