

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE CITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2014 - 5:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for February 11, 2014 was called to order by Council Vice-President Greg Leigh at 5:00 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 Vice President Greg Leigh, Council Members Clarence Vetter, Henry Tweten, and Mark Olstad.

Karla Anderson, Finance Director; Nancy Ellis, City Planner; Ron Galstad, City Attorney; Charlotte Helgeson, Library Director; David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer; Megan Nelson, Executive Assistant; Jim Richter, EDHA Director; Jason Stordahl, Public Works Director and Corey Thompson, IT Manager.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:

The Council Vice-President Determined a Quorum was present

**1. City Council Ward 2 Interview – City Council
a. 5:00 pm Dale Helms**

Council Vice-President Leigh asked Mr. Helms if he had a few opening remarks and said the council would proceed with questions. Mr. Helms introduced himself to the council and said how he has lived in Ward 2 for the last 40 years. He briefly mentioned his family, how he had purchased Triangle Transportation and been in business for about a year and a half, and gave the council a brief summary of his work experience. He explained how he has run for council before and has an interest in the City and politics. Mr. Helms added how sometimes he can be a little outspoken but he says what he feels. He stated how he would like to represent Ward 2 and represent the people. He said how if anyone has an issue, from Ward 2 or any part of the City, he would have no problem dealing with them. Mr. Helms said a goal he had would be try and make City Council more user friendly and make people welcome at City Hall so they can come in to ask questions and talk about issues since it is their lives that are represented and they have the right to speak.

Council Vice-President Leigh said the council members will be asking questions by going around the table. Council member Olstad asked what was something the City could improve on other than being more friendly. Mr. Helms responded by saying business and jobs. He used himself as an example. He explained how when he went to purchase Triangle he went to

different banks in East Grand Forks and asked how much they were looking for as a down payment. The bank told him they would need 60% down. He said he would like to see if the City and the local banks can work together to try and keep more business in East Grand Forks. He added that Grand Forks banks only required 10% down.

Council member Vetter did not have any questions for Mr. Helms. Mr. Murphy asked what Mr. Helms thought what East Grand Forks' greatest strengths and weaknesses were. Mr. Helms stated the greatest strength is the people because of how the residents come together. He said there might be some things that could be improved on but he didn't think East Grand Forks had a real weakness.

Council member Tweten asked Mr. Helms if he was familiar with the EDA. He stated he was and added he had picked up with the paperwork from the EDA but didn't have a chance to get it turned in. He also commented that a loan from the EDA would have interfered with his loan from the bank. Council member Tweten stated how active the EDA was and that it is not a bank but there to help develop business. Mr. Murphy commented how questions need to stay on topic. Council member Tweten stated he was wondering if there is possible conflict and that he didn't have any other questions.

Mayor Stauss said he is very interested in youth and senior citizens in the community. He asked Mr. Helms what his interest is with senior citizens and youth in the community and if he is involved with anything. Mr. Helms stated senior citizens were part of his reasons to wanting to be on the council. He explained how many things can be learned from the senior citizens of the community and how more needs to be done to develop programs for them so they are more active within the community. He stated that taxes are not the way since taxes are hard on senior citizens along with everyone else. He added how there isn't enough housing for seniors and some have had to move to Grand Forks so that is something that could be expanded. Mayor Stauss asked about youth. Mr. Helms stated how youth is the strength of the community and nation moving forward. He stated how the youth has impressed him with their talent and hard work. He explained how that needs to continue and how there needs to be programs available for youth but the City should not have to finance these programs, parents need to be involved and help out. Mayor Stauss asked how he was involved with the Heritage group. Mr. Helms stated he has been very active with the Heritage Center for many years by being president and chairperson and would like to see the City more involved. He added that the City does not need to be involved financially but give support. Council member Tweten stated that most of the council and department heads are members of the Heritage Foundation so the last few years there had been more activity that way.

Council Vice-President Leigh asked the city attorney and department heads if they had any questions for Mr. Helms which none did. Council Vice-President Leigh then asked if there was anything that he came in prepared to tell the council or answer a question that was not asked that he would like to make a final comment on. Mr. Helms didn't think so since he had been in front of the council enough. He gave a brief history of his friendship with the late Mr. Vonasek, how they had discussed items, and how they looked at things the same and that is why he decided to apply for this position. Council Vice-President thanked Mr. Helms for this time.

b. 5:15 pm Erin Almlie

Council Vice-President Leigh said he didn't know if everyone knew Ms. Almlie and asked the council to introduce themselves. After introductions Council Vice-President Leigh asked if Ms. Almlie would like to make an opening statement and then the council would proceed by ask questions. Ms. Almlie said she would like to start with the questions.

Council member Olstad asked Ms. Almlie what specific talents, skills, or mindset that would be beneficial to the council. Ms. Almlie stated she is organized, logical, and an individual who is task oriented. She added that she will listen to someone else's point of view but know when to move forward and get things accomplished. Ms. Almlie also told the council that she is not originally from the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks area, she isn't aware of the past issues, and commented how a fresh pair of eyes can be a good thing.

Council member Vetter stated he did not have any questions at this time for Ms. Almlie. Mr. Murphy asked Ms. Almlie what she thinks are East Grand Forks greatest strengths and weaknesses are. Ms. Almlie said that the greenway and the boardwalk area is one of the greatest assets to the community. She added that there isn't much for retail shopping in this area and would like to see more added that would help draw in young professionals and families to the community.

Council member Tweten commented how Ms. Almlie had graduated from Bemidji State University. He then asked her if she had any other formal education after that. Ms. Almlie told the board that she has received a Masters degree in Education from the University of Houston. Council member Tweten then asked if she is required to have continuing education with her job at the college. She stated that she was. He asked if she was tenured. She stated that she was. Council member Tweten asked how long Ms. Almlie had lived in East Grand Forks. She said she had lived here for 6 ½ years.

Council member Tweten commented how Ms. Almlie had used the phrase East Grand Forks was a gem and asked her to explain. Ms. Almlie stated growing up in northern Minnesota East Grand Forks was a city her family drove through to get to Grand Forks and Fargo. She added that when she moved here she fell in love with the community because it is close knit, all the kids in the neighborhood go to school with each other, there are neighborhood barbeques, she really likes the feel of the town and how others should have the opportunity to see these things as well.

Council member Tweten asked if she frequents the parks in town. Ms. Almlie explained how she runs on the paths, her family snowshoes in the winter by the river; they ride their bikes on the paths to go to the library, and they enjoy being able to see all of the wild life in the greenway. Council member Tweten asked Ms. Almlie if she realizes that if she is appointed she will not only represent Ward 2 but the entire City. Ms. Almlie said yes. He then explained how often the council meets, how everyone should receive the same information, and how the council needs to try work as a team. Ms. Almlie explained how part of her job includes being on division chair which she needs to listen to faculty and bring their concerns to the administration and then sometimes make the hard decision that not everyone might like but will be best overall. Council

member Tweten asked what Ms. Almlie likes to read. She stated she likes to read crime novels because she likes to try and solve the problem before she gets the end of book.

Mayor Stauss asked Ms. Almlie if she had joined any organizations dealing with youth or senior citizens. Ms. Almlie stated she is a member of the Education Foundation, she is on an advisory committee for respiratory board at the college, and that she tried running for the school board last year. She added she has a very strong interest in youth. Mayor Stauss asked if she had any ideas to help senior citizens. Ms. Almlie stated she does not know what the opportunities available for the seniors so she doesn't have any ideas but is willing to learn and try new things. Mayor Stauss asked if there was anything else the council should know about her interests with youth. Ms. Almlie stated that since she is an educator she has a strong focus on education. She explained how she believes that if students are well educated and stay in school they stay out of trouble. Along with that she added how she believes a strong education is the starting point for a successful future.

Mr. Galstad said he did not have any questions for Ms. Almlie. Mr. Murphy asked in her perception, did she have an example or something that was not a good policy or not a good decision of the City Council. Ms. Almlie said nothing she could think of. She added that she hasn't been here long enough to have seen any radically bad decisions and that everything she has seen has been wonderful.

Council Vice President Leigh asked if any of the department heads had any questions for Ms. Almlie. There were no questions from the department heads. Council Vice-President Leigh asked Ms. Almlie what one improvement would she like to see made in the City. Ms. Almlie said retail opportunities in the boardwalk area which might including clothing since Minnesota does not charge tax on those purchases. Council Vice-President Leigh thanked Ms. Almlie for her time.

2. Discussion of Interviews – City Council

Council member Tweten asked if this will be brought up at the next meeting and voted on by secret ballot. Council Vice-President Leigh stated that the vote will take place at the next council meeting and be done by paper ballot. He then asked if anyone wanted to discuss the interviews or if they wanted to digest the information. No discussion took place.

3. Update Regarding Special Assessments – Ron Galstad

Council Vice-President Leigh reminded the council this issue had been brought up some time ago and asked Mr. Galstad to address this issue. Mr. Galstad stated how he tried to resolve this issue but was not able to. He explained how the City will be following the reassessment process, provide the Johnsons with a notice, and give them the opportunity to make any objection which is outlined in the proposed resolution. Council Vice-President Leigh recommended that the date of the public hearing should be put off until the end of April or wait until May so the Johnsons will have time to come back to the area. Council Vice-President Leigh told the council to speak with Mr. Murphy if they have any questions. Council member Tweten commented how the City needs to have a better process for platting. Ms. Ellis stated that there is a process in place but

there are a few things that are being worked out. Mr. Murphy stated that moving forward the developer's agreement will be stronger, the department heads are working as a team, and everyone will be on the same page.

This item will be referred to a City Council Meeting for action.

4. Request to Purchase Pump for Lift 1 – Jason Stordahl

Mr. Stordahl stated there was a pump in lift one that was on the maintenance list to be replaced. He explained how the City was told the prices would not include a trade on the pump that is to be replaced but there was a 25% discount included on the Minnesota Pump Works quote. He said how without the discount the pump would cost \$37,378.75 which would still be less than the quote from Electric Pump. He stated he would be recommending purchasing the pump from Minnesota Pump Works.

This item will be referred to a City Council Meeting for action.

ADJOURN:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER OLSTAD, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, TO ADJOURN THE FEBRUARY 11, 2014 COUNCIL MEETING OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 5:36 P.M.

Voting Aye: Vetter, Tweten, Olstad, and Leigh.

Voting Nay: None.

David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer