

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE CITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2014 - 5:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for February 25, 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:, Council Vice President Greg Leigh, Council Members Clarence Vetter, Dale Helms, Henry Tweten, Mark Olstad, and Chad Grassel.

Karla Anderson, Finance Director; Nancy Ellis, City Planner; Mike Hedlund, Police Chief; Charlotte Helgeson, Library Director; Gary Larson, Fire Chief; David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer; Megan Nelson, Executive Assistant; and Jason Stordahl, Public Works Director.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:

The Council Vice-President Determined a Quorum was present

1. Residential Refuse & Recycling Contract – Jason Stordahl

Mr. Stordahl reminded the council this item had been brought up before and that the City needs to either renew the contract with Waste Management or ask for proposals from various vendors. Council Vice-President Leigh asked who owned the containers and what the cost be if the City switched vendors. He added that both are reputable companies. Council member Olstad stated that this item had been brought up before, mentioned the time period needed for a new company to be ready to handle the refuse collection of the City, and added that he thinks they should look at both companies. Council member Vetter agreed with gathering proposals because it keeps people honest. Council member Helms stated he was thought the council should collect proposals.

Council member Grassel asked if it was three month turn around that was needed to gear up. Mr. Stordahl said yes. Discussion followed about what containers if any were owned by the City or residents. Council Vice-President Leigh asked Council member Tweten what his opinion about this issue. Council member Tweten stated he didn't have an opinion at this time and added that the council didn't have sufficient information at this time to make a decision. Council Vice-President Leigh asked Mr. Stordahl to ask for proposals and bring the information back to council.

Council member Grassel stated that it needs to be determined if the residents own the green containers and if they do will they be allowed to continue to use them. Brian, from Countrywide Sanitation, addressed the council and stated they would be willing to work with the city. More discussion followed about if the residents own the containers and what services will be included in the proposals.

2. League of MN Cities Legislative Items – David Murphy

Mr. Murphy explained the City had received information from the League of Minnesota Cities who was asking for support on two issues during this year's legislation. He explained the first was about street improvement districts which with how it was written could also include parking districts. He then explained the second issue of alternative publications for public notices. He stated how this would allow cities more flexibility and could help cut down costs by being able to post notices on their websites instead of only in the newspaper. He said that if council was in agreement the resolutions will be included at the next meeting.

Council Vice-President Leigh said he would agree with both except he still thinks that notifications should still be put in the newspaper since not everyone uses computers or the internet. Mayor Stauss added how he would be worried about the newspaper going under if it doesn't have enough local support.

Mr. Murphy added that if they council feels more strongly about one of the issues and wasn't worried about the other issue they would not have to take action on both. Council member Vetter said he didn't know enough about the street improvement districts so he would vote no on that issue until he would be able to get more information so he knows what it is. He also added he didn't have a problem with having that ability to post notices on the website but he would also like to continue putting notices in the paper. Council member Olstad said the previous year street improvement districts have been pushed and if the information gets to Council member Vetter, this would be a good thing for the City to back. He added his support for alternative publications since it would be up to the council to decide if they should keep printing notices in the paper. Council Vice-President asked if it is important for the council to support the alternative publication or not. Mr. Murphy stated that if the council feels strongly enough the League is looking for resolutions of support. Council Vice-President Leigh said move forward on the alternative publication but to give both Council member Vetter and Helms the information on the street improvement districts and have that brought back to the next work session.

3. City of East Grand Forks Legislative Priorities – David Murphy

Mr. Murphy reminded the council that he, Mayor Stauss, and Council members Olstad and Tweten were going down to the State Capitol and meeting with legislators. Council Vice-President Leigh asked the council if they wanted any other topics brought up while this group was down at the capitol other than what was proposed. He stated that he thought the Red River State Recreation Area and waste water project were the most important. Ms. Nelson also informed the council that the group will be meeting with the Commissioner of the DNR so they will be able to speak with him about the recreational area. Council member Vetter added that they might want to mention the freon issue and how the rinks will need to be updated. Mr.

Murphy stated it had been proposed to set aside 15 million to help update rinks around the state.

4. Mowing Assessment – David Murphy

Mr. Murphy explained how a property in town was under the care of a guardianship and it was in violation of the City's weed and grass ordinance. He added how notification was sent, nothing was done to the property, and the City had to hire the property to be mowed. He stated a bill had been sent to the guardianship but was never paid. Mr. Murphy continued to explain how ownership of the property changed before the pending mowing assessment was certified and the City had not been contacted by the title company when they conducted a search. The City had been in contact with the title company to try and collect the debt unsuccessfully. Mr. Murphy stated he sees this as uncollectable debt.

Council Vice-President Leigh informed the council that according to state statute only the City Council has the ability to pass a resolution to write off bad debt. Council member Vetter asked to send the assessment over to the county so it is on the record right away and the title companies would find it in a search if they don't contact the City. Discussion followed about the process of weed and grass nuisances. Ms. Anderson stated that the Administration Office will contact the county to see if mowing assessments could be sent over throughout the year instead of only once.

Other

Mr. Murphy reminded the council of the Grand Forks Mayor's luncheon that would be taking place the next day. He also informed them of a letter he received regarding street signage on Burlington Drive and how they asked to have this matter brought up at the next work session. He added that this should be considered an administrative matter and that the sign has been ordered. The last item Mr. Murphy informed the council the Library board discussed more roof and condensation issues. He stated the Library Board recommended contacting a real estate attorney specialist. He explained how early in the day he and Ms. Helgeson had contacted a specialist, they will be sending him the information about what has happened, and if it is necessary to take action the City will have to do so by October.

ADJOURN:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER OLSTAD, TO ADJOURN THE FEBRUARY 25, 2014 COUNCIL MEETING OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 5:29 P.M.

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

Voting Nay: None.

David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer