

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE CITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2016 – 5:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for March 22, 2016 was called to order by Council President Mark Olstad 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 President Mark Olstad, Council Vice-President Chad Grassel, Council Members Clarence Vetter, Mike Pokrzywinski, Henry Tweten, and Marc DeMers.

Dave Aker, Parks & Recreation Superintendent; Karla Anderson, Finance Director; Nancy Ellis, City Planner; Ron Galstad, City Attorney; Paul Gorte, Economic Development Director; Mike Hedlund, Police Chief; Charlotte Helgeson, Library Director; Gary Larson, Fire Chief; Megan Nelson, Executive Assistant; and Jason Stordahl, Public Works Director.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:

The Council President Determined a Quorum was present

1. Northland Community & Technical College Presentation – President Dennis Bona

President Dennis Bona introduced himself as well as Ms. Jodi Stassen, Mr. Brian Huschle, and Mr. Carey Castle to the Council. He informed the Council he had been with the college since July of 2015 and how this would be a short presentation showing how Northland Community and Technical College is an asset, a resource, and how the City and the college have become partners. He first highlighted the economic impact the college has on East Grand Forks regarding employing 140 full time staff, having local expenditures of \$500,000 per year, how they try to keep construction and renovation projects with local contractors, and how the traffic of 2800 students has an impact on the City.

President Bona continued the presentation reviewing academic programming explaining how there are 94 programs in which students can become certified or receive a diploma. He stated how they also offer employer training and have worked with over 152 employers in the area to provide training to over 3000 employees. He added how many students that attend Northland find jobs locally. He informed the Council there is a virtual tour now available of the entire campus on their website, that the College has hosted or participated in numerous local events, and what adult education courses they now offer. President Bona also told the Council about the NCTC Foundation, the scholarships they are able to provide, and their performance rate.

President Bona told the Council about future programming, how evening courses will be offered, and how they are looking into what manufacturers will need in the area along with agriculture and unmanned aerial systems. He added how much of the unmanned aerial program is located at the Thief River Falls

campus but that they are looking at where the need is. President Bona then commented how they are looking at partnership opportunities and mentioned how they have partnered with the City before regarding the purchase of a fire truck and for using a parking lot for the truck driving program. He also added that they partner up with the Forx Builders on the home they build every year.

Council member Tweten commented on the medical programs that the college has and how this school has an affect that may not always be visible but that it is there. Mayor Stauss added how very important the college is to the community. Council President Olstad stated that he was glad Northland was in the community and how he was looking forward to continue to work with them in the future. Council member Pokrzywinski invited President Bona to meetings a couple times a year to give an update to the Council on how things were going. He added how attending the college is very attractive compared an expensive university and that he hopes enrollment keeps growing. Discussion followed about how the college is trying to keep tuition down for students and how the economy can affect enrollment.

2. Down Town Banners – Mark Olstad

President Mark Olstad said the request had been made to have this item moved to the next work session. Mayor Stauss commented how he typically orders the banners and how the order needs to be placed. He stated that he had already picked out a banner that could be used this year, added that it is up to the Council, and how they would be paying more for specialized banners. Council President Olstad stated that this discussion could wait a couple weeks.

3. Request for Reduction in Sewage Fee – Mark Olstad

Council President Olstad stated that the City has been asked for a reduction in the sewage portion of a utility bill by Mr. Scott Richter because he had a skating rink in his back yard. He explained how the bill had been included in the packet showing the sewage portion was \$146.25. He added how the average usage totaled \$8.12. He stated how the sewage usage was tied to water usage since it was based on a percentage of water usage and most of the water went into the ground. Mayor Stauss commented that the Council should consider this since it was for kids. Council member Tweten commented how in cases like this people should be getting approval beforehand. Discussion followed about how a notice could be sent out with the utility bill, if the sprinkle rate could be used for skating rinks, and how the sprinkle rate is based on an average water usage. Ms. Ellis asked if this was going to be the new policy and how she knows of other residents that may come in and ask for a reduction in there bill as well. Mayor Stauss commented how the water is not going into the sewer so the City is not treating the water. Council President Olstad stated how the Council will have to look at this more but this item will be moved to the next meeting.

4. Microbrewery License – Megan Nelson

Ms. Nelson informed the Council that she had been contacted last November by someone interested in opening up a microbrewery in the City. She explained that she didn't have the necessary information, requested information from the State, and told the Council how the State would issue a license for the microbrewery or distillery but the City would license a taproom or cocktail room. She asked for direction from the Council before spending any more time on this item. Council President Olstad commented how there are separate items with one being breweries that were allowed to serve and then just having a brewery. He asked if separate ordinances would be required. Mr. Galstad stated that he hadn't looked into anything at this point. Discussion followed about how the requirements would be dependent on what the establishment is, what the City is allowed to regulate, and what the Council

would be willing to consider.

Council member DeMers said he was interested, how there is opportunity there, and asked to have Mr. Galstad look into this further. Council President Olstad asked if the off-sale ordinance should be amended to include this. Ms. Nelson commented how the person who contacted her specifically asked about a taproom so they would also be looking at on-sale also. Council member Pokrzywinski stated how this was a growing trend in business and how the City should remove obstacles if they are able to so he was in favor of doing what the City can.

Mr. Galstad commented how the City may also want to look at the business ordinance and possibly have businesses in East Grand Forks register with the City so the City is aware of who is conducting business in East Grand Forks. Council member Pokrzywinski stated that unless it is a regulated business he was not in favor of requiring a permit or the City adding regulations to whoever would like to do business in the City.

5. Other

Council Vice-President Grassel reminded the Council how there has been meetings with Valley Golf for some time regarding their situation and that the EDA was looking at extending Valley Golf's loan from the 280 fund which is controlled by the City and how funds may need to be transferred. Ms. Anderson explained how there were funds available in the 401 project fund that could be transferred to the 280 fund for the housing project program. She added how they were looking into other funds and what the restrictions were on those funds. Council Vice-President Grassel said the total loan amount would be approximately \$75,000 and asked if there were any issues with that. Council member Vetter asked why they would be using the 280 fund. Council Vice-President Grassel explained that is where the loan originated from. Mayor Stauss asked about the payback. Council Vice-President Grassel said they were working on that. Council member Pokrzywinski said all they were asking for was Council approval for transferring funds and added there was lots of activity going on with the housing program. He added how the golf course has fallen on hard times but projected a break even budget for 2016.

Council member DeMers asked if the County or School authorized the abatement of taxes. Council member Pokrzywinski said it was before the School Board and will be going before the County in April. Council member DeMers asked if the loaned funds would be restricted in any way and said he would not be in favor of giving any unrestricted funds. Discussion followed about how this was not a bailout, that the City would gain oversight of operations, how the golf course is asking to have their loan funds re-advanced, and that the transfer would prevent the 280 fund from being in the hole at the end of the year. Mayor Stauss commented it would cost the City a lot more to run the golf course if Valley Golf shuts their doors. Council member Pokrzywinski said this was the best with no good options, reviewed how the golf course was changed by the levy system, and how they are currently struggling. He added how it is beneficial for the City that the golf course is up and running. Mr. Gorte stated that a transfer would only be done if needed. Discussion followed about how originally it was the EDA that had suggested the refund of the loan, how now the golf course was asking for those funds, and that the Council would like to ask for an agreement. Mr. Gorte said this could be done at a future date since this was going to be done as contingency. Council President Olstad asked for more information to be brought back to the April 12th Work Session.

Council member DeMers informed the Council that he had attended the Red Lake River Corridor joint powers board. He stated how the group is looking at enhance this area as a trail in northwest Minnesota. He explained how this board was created in 2003, when the funding went away they stopped meeting,

and now there are legacy funds available. He stated they were asking for a reconfirmation of support from the City along with an appointee and alternate. Council member DeMers commented that he would be the appointee, how the process has started of filling out the application to be designated as a regional trail, and how there isn't any cost to be a part of the board. He stated how they will need to update the master plan which would cost considerably less than it cost to put together the original master plan. He asked the Council if they were still interested in being a part of this, that the application would have to be submitted by April 29th, and the master plan would be updated after that.

Mayor Stauss said the biggest problem for this group was getting funding and that nothing ever moved forward. He added how if they were able to get the legacy funds as a region it would be worth doing. Council member Pokrzywinski stated that the City would need to decide what kind of project the City would like to do and how there were some ideas out there already. He added how this will help build partnerships with neighbors and how this corridor was a valuable asset to the community so he was in support of this. Council President Olstad stated that he thought it was a good idea to be involved, to work with neighbors, and hopefully it will be able to take off which will help enhance the communities. Discussion followed about who should be the representative and alternate and how there will also be committees for this. Council President Olstad stated that Council member DeMers could be the representative and anyone else interested being the alternate could contact Council member DeMers.

Council President Olstad reminded the Council about the trip down to the State Capitol. He commented about their meetings, how quick some of the meetings were, and that Mr. Murphy and Council member Buckalew would be testifying at a committee hearing for the City regarding the sales tax. Council member DeMers said he thought things went well but that no one really knows what will happen since it is such a short session.

Council member Tweten asked if Mr. Barry Wilfahrt if he had any comments about the Tech College. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that he has worked very closely with the school, how 75% of their graduates stay in the area after graduating, and that was very important.

ADJOURN:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER POKRZYWINSKI, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, TO ADJOURN THE MARCH 22, 2016 WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 6:18 P.M.

Voting Aye: Olstad, Grassel, DeMers, Vetter, Pokrzywinski, and Tweten.

Voting Nay: None.

Absent: Buckalew.

David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer