

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE CITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2016 – Following the Special Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for May 24, 2016 was called to order by Council President Mark Olstad at 5:07 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, Craig Buckalew, Henry Tweten, and Marc DeMers.

Dan Boyce, Water & Light Manager; Mark Dragich, Interim Director; Nancy Ellis, City Planner; Steve Emery, City Engineer; Ron Galstad, City Attorney; Paul Gorte, Economic Development Director; 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 President Determined a Quorum was present.

1. Request to Pave Parking Lot – Paul Gorte

Mr. Gorte told the Council the parking lot he was referring to was the lot located next to the VFW. He said that it was very common for this lot to have cars parked here for the businesses located nearby. He reminded the Council that there is a new restaurant that is going to be located on the first floor of the Minnesota Heights building and how there are concerns about available parking in this area of the City. He stated that he was bringing forward a proposal to pave the lot using TIF dollars and help make sure parking is available to serve the businesses downtown. Council President Olstad asked if there were any questions and commented that Mr. Craig Tweten would also like to address the Council.

Council member DeMers asked if paving this would preclude the City from selling or developing this lot in the future. Mr. Gorte said it would change the way or change the approach the City would take with this lot. Council member Vetter mentioned that the VFW had been interested in putting a door on the side and if anyone had talked with the VFW to see what their plans are. Mr. Gorte explained that he brought this to the Council before bringing it to the VFW. Mayor Stauss asked that they dress up the side of the building if parking is put here. Council Vice-President Grassel asked if it was feasible to use asphalt instead of concrete if the Council would still be considering selling this lot and asked if that would cause massive problems. Mr. Emery said the Council could look at asphalt as an option. He explained that concrete would cost more up front, that there would have much less maintenance over

time, but that asphalt would be cheaper upfront. Mayor Stauss commented how the lot had been for sale for over 20 years and right now if a building is put there it would create more of a problem with parking. Council member Buckalew commented how the Council has discussed parking districts for a long time and now may be the time to speak with the businesses to help protect their interests in available parking and help with maintenance costs in the future.

Mr. Craig Tweten reminded the Council that he is with Community Contractors. He commented how he thinks the Council is wrong, listed the places where they are building, and how they have developed the apartments in the downtown. He told the Council that Monday evening he counted parking stalls and what was available for parking. He said he feels there are about 185 stalls to use. He asked the Council to continue to grow the community and continue to develop the city. He showed the Council an example of an apartment building his company was building in Bismarck and how a very similar structure could be built on that corner lot. He added how he could include parking and commercial space on the first floor. Discussion followed about how this proposed building could be either 4 or 5 stories high and how an additional apartment building may not be an asset since parking is an issue already.

Council member DeMers stated how spending \$180,000 for a concrete parking lot is a terrible waste of money and a terrible project for the City. He added how the lot hasn't sold in the last 20 years but in the last 10 years the downtown has changed. Mayor Stauss asked if there were restrictions on how high the building could be. Ms. Ellis said not in the down town area and added a parking study had been completed so she had more information if the Council was interested. Council member Buckalew asked if the proposed apartment building would meet the current city code. Ms. Ellis said the ordinance had been amended which required 35% of the ground floor to be commercial. Council member Buckalew asked Mr. Tweten if he was prepared to proceed without using public monies. Mr. Tweten said he would need to purchase the land for \$1, need \$250,000 in cash, and a 9 year tax abatement to make it work. More discussion followed about similar project that Mr. Tweten was working on in Fargo. Council President Olstad asked if the Council would be open to taking a step back and look at the project before making a decision. After a brief discussion it was decided the Council would look at a proposal before moving forward.

2. Request to Implement Broadcasting of City Meetings – Corey Thompson

Mr. Thompson informed the Council he had put together a proposal as requested for the implementation of broadcasting the public meetings. He explained that three cameras would be installed in the Council Chambers and two cameras would be installed in the Training Room. He added the cost for equipment and labor to install everything will be just under the \$25,000 amount of the grant. Council member DeMers asked what the implementation schedule would be. Mr. Thompson stated that they would start installing and updating equipment in July, test it throughout the fall, and start running full time at the beginning of next year. Council member DeMers asked to have the MPO meetings broadcast as well as city meetings.

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

3. Request to Enter into Pop Contract – Mark Dragich

Mr. Dragich informed the Council that the current contract had expired. He stated that both Pepsi and Coca Cola were contacted and asked to submit bids but only Coca Cola did. He explained they had proposed either a 5 or 10 year contract. He recommended moving forward with the 10 year contract and earmark the funds for paying off the zambonis. Council President Olstad asked how the revenue was handled. Mr. Dragich said he wasn't sure but he thought that it currently goes into the general fund and is not earmarked for anything specific. Council member DeMers said he didn't have a problem having revenue go for a specific purpose but that would mean a cut somewhere else. Council President Olstad commented that those payments come out of the general fund so it would be a wash. He asked to have that determined before the next Council Meeting. Council member Vetter asked what concession stands that the City has since they don't run any of them. Mr. Dragich said the City doesn't run any of the concession stands and but they all fall under this contract.

Council member Buckalew said he was reviewing prices which included a 3% yearly increase. He asked if the City was committing to something they may be changing in the future if they change to fountain pop to save more money. Mr. Dragich said that was looked into this last year. He said the volume the City goes through it wouldn't save very much for the price the City could purchase the fountain pop for. Council member Buckalew asked if he was concerned about the price escalator. Mr. Dragich said he wasn't concerned about it because the cost is not much higher than what pop is being sold for at a gas station and the increase won't be amounting to much. He added he was recommending the 10 year contract because if they went with a five year contract the City may not be offered any more funding once the contract expires. Council member DeMers asked if the City could ask for an escalator on the amount received per year. Mr. Dragich said he certainly could.

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

4. Request to Purchase Mobile Data Computers – Mike Hedlund

Mr. Hedlund reminded the Council this had previously been brought forward and it was requested to look into other options. He said that staff and the IT Department looked into other possible options and found a semi-rugged computer that came with a three year warranty which included accidental an were about half the cost of the tough books. He commented that it had good reviews but if there are issues with these computers he will be coming back and asking to purchase tough books. Council member DeMers thanked Chief Hedlund for looking into other options. He then asked if they should get tablets in the future. Mr. Thompson stated that had been looked into and currently the best option is to continue using the laptops.

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

5. Request to Review Rental Registration & Inspection Practices – Nancy Ellis

Ms. Ellis explained how she and the fire chief or a building inspector go on yearly inspections of rental properties to make sure there aren't any fire code issues. She stated how these inspections are time consuming and difficult to schedule. She said they have been receiving push back because of frequent inspections. She told the Council the inspections cost more than what is collected for a rentals each year

and how there are around 600 inspections that need to be done. She asked for direction from the Council if they should continue with what they are currently doing or if this process should be amended.

Council President Olstad commented how a five year cycle could be beneficial. Ms. Ellis stated they could do a percentage of inspections each year. Mayor Stauss commented how people could call in if there was an issue in between inspections. Discussion followed about how they only look at fire code issues on the inspections, how the housing authority does inspections as well including vacant spaces, and changing inspections to every five years could change how the inspection fee is charged. Chief Larson commented how they may want to also include the ability to pull the certificate of occupancy. Ms. Ellis added if they added being able to pull the certificate of occupancy and inspect every five years the inspections would become more efficient. Council President Olstad asked if there were issues changing inspections to every five years. There were none. Ms. Ellis said she would make the changes and bring the information back for the Council to review.

This item will be brought back to a future Work Session.

6. Request for Approval of Special Use Permit – Nancy Ellis

Ms. Ellis reminded the Council about the proposed cell tower that would be located between the VFW Arena and the south end fire station. She explained the Planning Commission is recommending the City Council approve the special use permit with the listed conditions that include a wooded fence for screening around the tower. She asked Mr. Galstad to speak about the lease agreement.

Mr. Galstad stated he had spoken with Mr. Buell, that they agreed upon the language used in the agreement but they were still discussing what the space would be rented for each month. He said Verizon was offering \$12,000 per year and that he had been looking into what other cities collect and how that it varies from city to city. He explained when he asked for a higher rent Mr. Buell said they would make the foot print smaller so the City would be able to rent the space to other carriers instead. Discussion followed about how the City should ask for more a month and if a re-opener should be added. Council President Olstad asked to try and negotiate \$2000 per month for rent. Council member Vetter asked they didn't agree to \$2000 per month to start with \$1000 per month and add an additional \$500 for each carrier that rents space from them. Mr. Galstad said he would ask about both options.

7. Request to Approve the Update to the Transit Title VI Plan & LEP Plan – Nancy Ellis

Ms. Ellis informed the Council that this update was required by law and had to be adopted in order for the City to receive transit dollars. She said the plan had been prepared and updated to meet the goals and she was asking for approval.

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

8. Other

Council member DeMers said the Red Lake River Corridor group was working on a master plan and once that is completed they will be submitting for funding. He added this group was supporting a June 10th paddling event on the Red River in East Grand Forks and encouraged people to attend.

Ms. Helgeson informed the Council there was an art exhibit in the library which was created by homeless veterans and would be there until Thursday so if they got a chance to stop in.

Mr. Galstad mentioned that the City may need to become more involved in the purchasing of water rights and more information would be coming forward shortly.

Mayor Stauss commented how good the new fence looked at the pool, he stopped by the campground and commented how Catherine needs to be kept more in the loop and receive more help from the City. He also asked to keep a record of what the City does in the park so when it comes to possibly renewing the contract the city should review the information and see if it should be taken over completely. He then asked why the fountain is not working. Mr. Dragich stated that a supply line is broken and it is being addressed. Mayor Stauss then asked if the flowers were going to be out for Memorial Day. Mr. Dragich said the flower beds will be planted but the pots and hanging plant still need some time. Mayor Stauss commented how they really need to have those out for Memorial Day. He continued saying even though he didn't want to bring this up but the number one issue last year was flowers. He stated he didn't like the article in the paper, it made him look like a villain, and it was his fault there weren't flowers. He explained the cost of the flowers was less than 1% of the City budget that they couldn't find the funds to cover the flowers.

Mayor Stauss reviewed how the City receive around \$800,000 from the sale of the mall, how some people retired without being replaced, the swimming pool budget was cut which was included in 5% cut, there weren't as many snow storms, and said how it could have been fit in. He stated how both he and Mr. Dale Helms raised \$27,000 for the flowers. He said that didn't bother him but the part that did bother him was that the City Administrator was told not to give any assistance. He continued saying how the funds couldn't be run through the City and this group given no support. He asked the reason why the City wouldn't accept the flowers. He explained the left over funds were given to the Heritage Foundation and they used to decorate Christmas trees by the VFW and the war memorial. He commented again how this was questioned. He pointed out to the Council all of the items in a picture he had handed out that have been donated for beautification of the City. He added he did not cut the budget to stop the flowers being planted and that he has always been in favor of beautifying the City.

ADJOURN:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER POKRZYWINSKI, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER BUCKALEW, TO ADJOURN THE MAY 24, 2016 WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 6:25 P.M.

David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer