

WEEKLY MEMO

Date: December 10, 2010

To: Mayor Lynn Stauss. Council President Dick Grassel, Vice President Henry Tweten, Council Members Marc Demers, Craig Buckalew, Wayne Gregoire, Greg Leigh, and Mike Pokrzywinski.

From: Scott Huizenga

RE: Weekly Update

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

December 14, 2010 – 5:00 pm – Work Session – Training Room

December 21, 2010 – 5:00 pm – Council Meeting – Council Chambers

December 24, 2010 – City Hall Closed – Christmas

December 28, 2010 – 5:00 pm – Work Session – Training Room (If Needed)

December 31, 2010 – City Hall Closed – New Years

WEEKLY UPDATE:

TED application

The City Engineer prepared a grant application to Minnesota's Transportation Economic Development (TED) program on behalf of the City. The application, if awarded, would fund almost \$1.6 million of a proposed \$2.25 million project to complete a "Farm to Market" route with improvements to 10th Street NE, and 5th Ave NE in and around the American Crystal Sugar complex. A small minority of the state funds are dedicated to Greater Minnesota.

City Hall Energy

I previously reported that city staff had identified HVAC controls that could save the City thousands per year by adjusting the cycles of the HVAC system. This week, the City opted to bring in house the control and monitoring of the HVAC system. The City previously contracted with the HVAC control installer to monitor the system. At one time, this service cost the City \$24,000. Two years ago, we scaled the contract back to \$6000. And, moving forward, there will be no monitoring costs beyond staff time. I commend the Information Technology Manager and the Building Official for identifying and controlling these cost-saving mechanisms for the City.

League of Minnesota Cities holds state budget deficit webinar

On Monday, December 6, the League of Minnesota Cities held a webinar that explained the background and consequences of the proposed \$6.2 billion state budget deficit. The materials and the entire presentation can be found on the League's web site at <http://www.lmc.org/page/1/forecast1210webinar-materials.jsp>. The presentation, brilliantly articulated by League analyst Gary Carlson, presented much analysis beyond the headlines we have already heard. Here are a few.

- The current biennium's small surplus of \$399 million (thanks to federal stimulus funds) is the first projected state surplus since February 2007.

- Revenues are projected to increase by approximately \$1.5 billion, or five percent in the next biennium.
- Expenses are projected to climb by \$8.3 billion, or 27.5 percent. Some state elected officials have called this projection “fictitious.” The reason that percentage is so large is that the state relied on \$2.3 billion in stimulus funding, \$1.9 billion in school funding shifts, and \$660 million in one-time spending reductions. The deficit assumes those items will be restored. The remaining increase is about 6.6 percent over two years, which is pretty close to average. If the state did not restore any of the above, it would indeed amount to a 27.5 percent cut.
- Overall, the budget deficit would require a 19.7 percent increase in revenues or a 16.1 percent reduction in expenditures. These numbers explain why the final budget solution will have to be a combination of taxes and spending cuts.
- Local Government Aid (LGA) has been unallotted over \$310 million since December 2008. Additionally, LGA for the next biennium has already been cut by \$113 million before the next session even starts. LGA is one of a handful of programs that have already sustained actual cuts – rather than delays, shifts, or one-time revenue bumps.
- Carlson said that there is a “likelihood that levy limits will be reimposed.”

Civic Center project history

Over the past few weeks, I have received several questions regarding the Civic Center project that essentially follow this theme: “Why are we talking about this now?” Therefore, I will provide this brief explanation of the project history to this point.

- School officials met with city staff last winter to discuss potential Civic Center improvements. The school quickly identified Title IX (“nine”) locker room improvements as the top priority.
- City and school officials along with Blue Line Club representatives met four times from June through early August.
- On July 6, the City Council passed Resolution 10-07-76, which authorized the City Engineer to develop plans and specifications for Civic Center locker room upgrades in an amount not to exceed \$60,000 (the amount will be about \$34,000 if the Council ultimately does not proceed with construction).
- City staff received six potential options for locker room upgrades, plus roof repair and ADA compliance (elevator) in late September.
- Staff discussed and narrowed the six options to two options based on input from Council members, staff, and school officials. The two options were presented to the City Council in November.
- And, the City Council requested the presence of school officials at the next work session, which will be held on Tuesday, December 14.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Library, Charlotte Helgeson

The East Grand Forks Campbell Library has a Facebook account. Inspired and maintained by one of our college student staffers. Take a look. In January, the Library will be surveying patrons for input about services. This should result in some interesting ideas with the current discussions surrounding the new Grand Forks Library. If there are any specific questions the council might like to suggest to the Library Board for inclusion, please refer them to Charlotte or Alderman Pokrzywinski.

Parks and Recreation, Dave Aker

Outdoor ice should be done at the end of next week. The Greenway week will be done before that.

Police Department, Chief Hedlund

East Grand Forks Police Department conducts Alcohol and Compliance Checks

On December 2, 2010 the East Grand Forks Police Department conducted alcohol compliance checks at fourteen local businesses that have liquor licenses (on-sale and/or off-sale). The checks were conducted by two underage subjects who were working in cooperation with the police department. These subjects were monitored by plain clothes police officers during the checks. When they were asked for ID the subjects provided their actual ID that showed that they were underage. Of the 14 businesses checked four of them served to the underage subjects.

On December 7, 2010 the East Grand Forks Police Department conducted a tobacco compliance check at the ten licensed businesses in East Grand Forks. In this case one juvenile subject worked with plain clothes officers who again monitored each situation. This subject also presented her actual ID when asked. Of the ten businesses checked two sold cigarettes to the juvenile and a third sold tobacco related/paraphernalia products.

Failed compliance checks, or other instances where local businesses are shown to have sold alcohol and/or tobacco to underage persons can result in monetary fines and license suspensions. The EGFPD has not conducted compliance checks for several years so in this instance all businesses that failed the checks are receiving warnings and being presented opportunities to better train their staff to minimize the opportunity for improper sales in the future.

Street Maintenance Parking and Snow Emergencies

The City of East Grand Forks recently adopted a new Street Maintenance parking ordinance that modifies the old calendar parking ordinance. The current ordinance limits parking in residential areas one morning per week in five different designated districts around the city. Unlike the former Calendar Parking ordinance which only ran during the winter months, this ordinance will run year round and should allow city staff to more effectively conduct routine street maintenance such as street sweeping. A related measure is the "Snow Emergency" portion of the parking ordinances. A "Snow Emergency" occurs if there has been a snowfall of two inches or more. When a snow emergency occurs there is no parking on any city street until that street is plowed to its full width. For a typical snowstorm this will usually occur within approx. 24 hours of the end of the storm. The "Snow Emergency" plowing/snow removal occurs on any given day and does not necessarily match with the Street Maintenance Parking.

EGFPD Dispatch Center Remodel

The East Grand Forks City Council approved a proposal by G.W. & Sons Construction to perform a remodeling project in the EGFPD Dispatch Center. This project will involve significant technological updates that will be completed by the City's IT staff and will also include a physical remodel of the facility to enhance the productivity of the employees working in the center. Construction on this project should begin in the near future.

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. American Crystal Sugar representatives will provide the Council a brief update.
2. The school superintendent and selected school board members will appear at the work session next week to discuss Civic Center options.
3. MPO staff will present the draft 2040 Land Use Plan update. The plan will appear for final adoption on December 21 with Council input.
4. MPO staff will present the intergovernmental agreements with the City of Grand Forks for transit services.
5. MPO staff will present the proposed 2011 fares for dial-a-ride and senior rider services.
6. MPO staff will present the proposed 2011 fares for paratransit services.
7. The Finance Director will present a proposed General Obligation Bond refinancing resolution to save City debt costs on existing debt.

Currently, I recommend that the Council meet for the last regular session of the year on December 21; and to reconvene on January 4, 2011 for the organizational session; without a work session on the last Tuesday in December unless there is a pressing need.