

WEEKLY MEMO

Date: January 14, 2011

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:

January 15, 2011 – Rally for Ryker

January 17, 2011 – City Hall Closed – Martin Luther King, Jr.

January 18, 2011 – 5:00 pm – Council Meeting – Council Chambers

January 24, 2011 – Senior Citizens Board Annual Lunch

January 25, 2011 - 5:00 pm – Work Session – Training Room

February 9, 2011 – CGMC – Greater Minnesota Day at the Capitol

WEEKLY UPDATE:

Transit development plan RFP

The Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) seeks a representative from East Grand Forks to serve on its Transit Development Plan Request for Proposals (RFP) selection committee. Please contact Michelle French if you are interested.

News from the League

House resolution would limit spending to previous biennium totals

The *League Bulletin* reports that Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan) introduced HR2, which would limit total spending and spending by category to the total authorizations of the previous biennium. This represents a “good news, bad news” scenario for cities. The bad news is that the Local Government Aid (LGA) program would again sustain cuts to the certified levels. The only solace in the bill is that the cuts would not be significantly worse than 2010. If legislature used the same formulas as last year, East Grand Forks would again be cut by approximately \$615,000. Schools and medical assistance would also be hit hard under the proposal. The spending plan assumes continuing the school funding shift until at least 2014. And, medical assistance presumably would not get federal stimulus funding to sustain the previous biennium levels.

Tax collections up slightly

The *Bulletin* also reports that state tax collections are up slightly in the January report from the Department of Revenue. Currently projections show a one percent increase from previous levels. Corporate income and franchise taxes show the largest gains. While sales taxes are still somewhat below expectations. Ironically, the first resolutions introduced in the House and Senate this year would reduce corporate income and franchise taxes.

Mandate relief bill

Finally, HF7 would eliminate a several state mandates that impact cities. Among the changes would be the elimination of the pay equity compliance and the elimination of the aggregate value of benefits in public sector contracts. Pay equity compliance mandates reporting to the state every three years on total salaries and benefits for all full-time employees to ensure that female-dominated job classifications are paid equally to male-dominated classes for equal *values* of work. Cities have pushed for elimination of pay equity for years. While equal pay for equal work is a concept that is virtually universally accepted, the administrative burdens of Minnesota's pay equity compliance is extremely costly to cities. The "Aggregate Value" clause of Minnesota labor law mandates that cities cannot change insurance provisions such as deductibles, copayments, or specific types of coverage without negotiating the changes with labor bargaining units. Eliminating this provision would allow cities to change health insurance provisions so long as the changes are consistent with specific labor agreement language. Mandate relief is one of the primary legislative priorities that is slated for Council consideration at next week's meeting. The City should strongly support HF 7 and similar efforts to continue mandate relief.

Civic Center Improvements

The Parks Superintendent, Civic Center Arena Manager, and I met with the design team this week to review design updates. Currently, the schedule calls for the City Council to discuss the proposed plans and specifications at the March 22 work session for possible approval at the first Council meeting in April. The City would then solicit construction bids for review in early May. This schedule is contingent upon final approval of a new lease agreement between the City and the School Board.

Storm Water/Waste Water monitoring addition

The Public Works Director has begun meeting with Water and Light staff regarding the proposed Waste Water/Storm Water Monitoring (SCADA) addition. Conceptually, Public Works would like to use space that is currently vacant in the water treatment plant for the monitoring. There is space both in the upstairs and basement levels of the plant. The City could save over \$120,000 as the unoccupied space could be converted to the monitoring operations.

Waste Water Interconnect

The City Engineer, the Finance Director, and I met with our respective counterparts in the Grand Forks regarding the proposed Waste Water Interconnect project. We have discussed this project as a proposed alternative to the currently proposed Waste Water Improvements Phase II. The alternative would construct a connection with the City of Grand Forks, which would treat the City's waste water at its waste water treatment plant. The costs of the two programs are similar in terms of cost, with estimates near \$10 million for either option. The advantages of a mechanical solution (in Grand Forks) is its ability to treat substances, such as phosphorous, that cannot be treated by a lagoon facility. Further, Grand Forks would be responsible for discharge regulations. East Grand Forks would retain control of the collection system (pipes and lift stations). The agreement would affect treatment only. Consultants from both cities (FS Engineering and AE2S Engineers) will present the alternatives to each City on Monday, January 24 the Tuesday, January 25. Staff will ask the City Council to decide on an option in February, so that the City can amend its project plan, if necessary to the Minnesota Public Finance Authority (PFA).

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Library, Charlotte Helgeson

Charlotte will be communicating with the MN State Library about access to the state's e-book collection. The collection is another service paid for by state dollars under the supervision of ELM (Electronic Library of Minnesota) but unavailable to the residents of East Grand Forks.

Parks and Recreation, Dave Aker

We have changed our cross country ski grooming until Thursdays.

Fire Department, Chief Randy Gust

The Fire Department is looking at setting up city wide training for any city employee that is interested in CPR and Basic First Aid. We hope to have the classes up and running sometime this spring or early summer. We hope that Department Heads will help us find out how many of their employee's would be interested in these courses.

AGENDA ITEMS:

#3 There is a scheduled public hearing for a proposed paving assessment project on 14th Ave SE. The project as proposed, would pave one half of 14th Ave SE from 13th St Se to 17th St SE at an estimated assessed cost of \$130,000. The Council has discussed options that could include the paving the entire street at an additional cost of \$90,000. There are other "half streets" on 17th Street SE and 11th Ave SE. This public hearing is an opportunity for affected residents to specifically address 14th Ave SE.

Consent: Includes a Special Event permit for a triathlon on the greenway and the proposed appointment of City representatives to the Red Lake River Corridor Commission.

#7 The Fire Department is proceeding with the promotion process for Assistant Chief and Engineer vacancies created by the retirement of Jeff Voigt.

#8 This resolution supports Legislature maintaining 2011 certified levels of Local Government Aid (LGA). The resolution would be sent to the Governor, the Leadership in both houses, and the city's legislative delegation.

#9 This resolution adopts the City's proposed Legislative priorities for the 2011 Legislature. Those priorities are:

1. Maintain LGA funding
2. Allow Levy Limits to Expire
3. Funding for Waste Water Improvements Phase II funding in a new bonding bill
4. Support an agreement to deed most of the Red River State Recreational Area (RRSRA) to the state in exchange for increased operational funds
5. Mandate Relief
6. Street Improvement Districts

#10 This resolution would re-authorize the City to solicit bids for the 2010 Safe Routes to School project. The project would extend the sidewalk on Bygland Road out to the middle school. The City previously rejected bids on this project in fall 2010.

#11 This resolution would re-authorize the City to solicit bids for 2010 Assessment Job No 2 – Storm Sewer. This project would separate the sanitary sewer from the storm water system in the area occupied by Northstar Terrace. The assessment would be paid solely by the property owner.