

WEEKLY MEMO

Date: January 28, 2011

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

From: Scott Huizenga

RE: Weekly Update

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

February 1, 2011 – 5:00 pm – Council Meeting – Council Chambers

February 8, 2011 - 5:00 pm – Work Session – Training Room – (If Needed)

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

February 12, 2011 – Winter Fest

February 15, 2011 – 5:00 pm – Council Meeting – Council Chambers

February 18, 2011 – 11:45 am – Intergovernmental Retreat - Mahnomen

WEEKLY UPDATE:

Labor Update

City elected and appointed officials have tentatively agreed on a new labor agreement with Water and Light Teamsters Local 120. The agreement covers 2011-2012. The provisions of the tentative agreement are similar to the agreements the City settled with other bargaining groups. Extended service steps for “grandfathered” (current) employees will be only one percent. New employees will be integrated into the adopted Citywide Compensation Plan without cost of living adjustments (COLAs). And, sick leave and vacation benefits are reduced for new employees. So, for the first time, Water and Light Department employees will operate under the same pay scale as other city employees. This will assist in pay equity compliance with the State of Minnesota and the overall pay philosophy that the City has adopted. The tentative agreement will be presented to the bargaining unit in approximately 10 days. And, the Water and Light Commission will consider the agreement on February 17 if the bargaining unit approves the agreement.

Workers Compensation

I met with the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust’s Senior Loss Control Consultant regarding 2010 workers compensation and property loss claims. Overall, 2010 saw an increase in claims from 2009. However, the cities *experience modifier* remains below 1.0. This indicates that the cities claims history is better than the aggregate League insurance portfolio, which encompasses the vast majority of cities in the state.

Northwest Corridor Study

The Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will soon release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the East Grand Forks northwest corridor traffic study. The study includes the East Grand Forks work plan request for a traffic impact study of the proposed 5th Avenue NW/Highway 2 intersection project. The study will also review the intersection of

River Road NW/17th St. NW/ 12th Ave NW. Proposals from interested firms will be due on March 28. And, the final report is slated for December 5, 2011.

City receives FEMA Firefighter Grant Award

The City received a grant award letter on Friday morning from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The grant would cover the salary for two years of one full-time firefighter provided the City maintains current staffing levels for at least three years. An amended agenda will include a resolution for the City to formally accept the grant award.

LGA cuts pass on largely party-line votes

The Minnesota House of Representatives on Thursday passed HF 130, which is a deficit reduction bill that would cut several programs including Local Government Aid (LGA). After several amendments, East Grand Forks will lose slightly less than originally proposed. The projected cut of \$548,021 is still quite significant. This version of the bill enacts the cuts for two years. LGA would theoretically be restored to current law in the next biennium. However, LGA funding has not had a history of being restored once cut. LGA today is lower than it was in 2002. The Senate has not yet voted on the companion bill. And, Governor Dayton has criticized the proposal for tackling only a portion of the budget outside of the entire budget framework. Rep. Deb Kiel (R- Crookston) was one of four Republicans to vote against the cuts.

The Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce passed a statement in support of Local Government Aid on Thursday morning. Chamber President Barry Wilfahrt forwarded the statement to Representative Kiel. The statement is attached.

Other Legislative News

- This week's *League Bulletin* reviewed several recently-introduced legislative items beyond LGA. Perhaps the highlight is HF192, which is dubbed as the "Reinventing Government Employment Act." The bill contains several measures aimed at drastically changing public employee compensation. First, the bill would prohibit *indefinitely* any raises to state and local employees including cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs), step increases, or longevity payments. Labor agreements in place would be honored through the end of their expirations. All pay would be frozen at least until the Minnesota Management and Budget Office completed a report on public compensation pay relative to the private sector. (Shameless plug: one can view my blog, *The West Wing*, <http://egfwestwing.areavoices.com>, to see my analysis of similar comparison studies). The bill also proposes a constitutional amendment that would transform Minnesota to a "Right to Work" state. Currently, public employees in designated union job classifications must join the selected union as a condition of employment. Employees in Right to Work states have the option of whether or not they wish to join the designated union.
- HF 162 would allow cities to use their web sites rather than newspapers for most public notices. East Grand Forks could potentially save \$8000-10,000 per year if this bill passed.
- Other legislative updates on items including environmental permitting, variance legislation, and economic development land holdings can be view on the *League Bulletin* web site at <http://www.lmc.org/page/1/cities-bulletin-newsletter.jsp>.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Library, Charlotte Helgeson

Our permanent projection system purchased with a Knight Grant is being used during training sessions scheduled by the public often, nearly every day for two weeks. Our meeting rooms are booked out as far as October this year. Library staff is currently working on programming grants for summer children's programs, author visits and workshops for 2011.

East Grand Forks High School and Middle School are exhibiting art at the library through February 19, 2011.

Police Department, Chief Michael Hedlund

Dispatch Center Remodel Update –

The dispatch center remodeling project is continuing with the majority of the major work completed. Lighting and ceiling updates should be completed within a few days and at that time the technology upgrades will be completed and the Department will transition back in to the center. The Department has been temporarily using an area in the Record's section of the Police Department building as a dispatch area.

Officers Attend Training –

Officer Darren Szczepanski is attending advanced Drug Recognition Expert Training this week in the Twin Cities. Szczepanski, who is the only certified Drug Recognition Expert on the Department will be able to use this training to provide training for the other officers in the Department on Field Sobriety Testing and on Drug Recognition.

Officer Dennis Robertson and Officer April Hansen are attending a two-day Critical Incident Stress Management course at the Grand Forks Public Safety Training Center. They will gain information on how to assist others when dealing with a variety of critical incidents and with crisis intervention situations.

Public Works, John Wachter

Recently we have been experiencing some issues with the fuel filters on some of the equipment. The equipment would lose power and after inspection the mechanics found clogged fuel filters. This led us to believe that we may have algae in the diesel fuel tank. Since then, the diesel tank has been dipped and the samples are being tested at the lab in St. Louis. We have also scheduled tank cleaning for February. Preliminary results from the lab indicate that there is no algae present in the tank. We are currently working with BG Products out of Bismarck to investigate the cause of the filter plugging. BG has indicated that there are other fleets experiencing the same issue. As we investigate I will keep you apprised of any developments.

STREETS

Snow removal continues. Both blowers were down for some time last week and the first part of this week. Both have been repaired and are operable. The 1988 Motor Grader number 118 has had major damage to the mole board tilt bracket. The bracket was stressed and sheared during the last snow event. The grader will be down for a couple weeks as we await parts. The repair will be in excess of \$4500.

Parks and Recreation, Dave Aker

The Civic Center located on Hwy 220 is fixed and it will light up from 6:00 pm - 10:00 pm, the neon arrow will not come on. Something with the arrow makes the timer burn out and it is too expensive to repair at this time.

The roof at the Civic Center is leaking in the women's bathroom now, we will try and keep the leaks to a minimal.

AGENDA ITEMS:

The consent agenda includes a special event permit request for Winter Fest on February 12; a gaming permit; and the proposed sale of a city-owned lot on Folsom Court.

9. This resolution approves amending the city's Waste Water Facility Plan with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to include the proposed Waste Water Interconnection with the City of Grand Forks for waste water treatment. The City will submit the plan to MPCA by March if the City Council approves the amendment. Then, the two cities will continue the process of preliminary design and feasibility of the proposed interconnect. The resolution sets the City toward a path of constructing the interconnection. However, the plan will not be finalized until design is complete and the appropriate Intergovernmental Agreements are in place. Those efforts will take several months.

10. The final new business item extends the previous intergovernmental agreement for transit services between the City of East Grand Forks and Grand Forks. The two cities continue to work with MPO on the final language for a new agreement.

Michelle French

From: Barry Wilfahrt [barry@gochamber.org]
Sent: Thursday, January 27, 2011 8:59 AM
To: rep.deb.kiel@house.mn
Subject: EGF Chamber Supports LGA

Dear Deb,

The GF/EGF Chamber of Commerce Board met this morning and voted to support continuing LGA to communities like East Grand Forks. I would also like you to know the Chamber does not receive funding of any kind other than basic membership dues from the City of EGF.

Please consider the following:

1. Over the past two years the City of EGF has already made substantial budget cuts to balance its budget without significantly increasing property taxes.
2. Since services have already been aggressively managed (cut) a further reduction in LGA will result in a very significant increase in property taxes or increase in fees for services, both of which will adversely impact businesses.
3. The competitive balance between EGF, MN and GF, ND is very important to the relative health of EGF compared to its much larger neighbor Grand Forks, North Dakota. Without LGA, this cost of doing business and cost of living in EGF versus GF could become out of balance. In other words we could see residents move from EGF to GF and also see businesses in EGF move to GF.

Thanks

Barry Wilfahrt, President & CEO
The Chamber - GF/EGF
701-772-7271 office
701-317-1555 cell
barry@gochamber.org
www.gochamber.org