

WEEKLY MEMO

Date: March 4, 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:

March 8, 2011 – 5:00 pm – Work Session – Training Room

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

March 22, 2011 – 5:00 pm – Work Session – Training Room

March 29, 2011 – 5:00 pm – Work Session – Training Room - If Needed

WEEKLY UPDATE:

Council Vacancy Timelines

The following is the proposed schedule for the current City Council vacancy and for the nomination of new Council officer positions due to the passing of Council President Grassel.

Early Next Week – The City will release an written application for interested **Ward 2 residents** who wish to be appointed to the vacant Council position. The application period will close on Thursday, March 24.

March 15 Regular Meeting– The City Council will appoint a new President and, if necessary, a new Vice President. The Mayor will also recommend a new appointee to the Economic Development and Housing Authority board (EDHA) to serve the remaining term of Council President Grassel.

March 29 Special Work Session – The fifth Tuesday of March will be reserved for the City Council to interview potential applicants, if necessary.

April 5 Regular Meeting – The City Council will appoint a new Ward 2 Council Member. This *temporary* appointee will serve until the next General Election on November 6, 2012. At that election, the Ward 2 position will be elected by eligible Ward 2 voters to serve the remaining two years of the Ward 2 term through 2014.

Legislative update

HF 481 would freeze local property taxes for two years. And, cities could not incur any new General Obligation debt after June 1, 2011. I have expressed the cities opposition to this measure to Rep. Deb Kiel. Currently, the city is well-positioned to maintain property taxes at a stable level *if* Local Government Aid (LGA) is held intact. Nonetheless, the City's adopted position is that property taxes are a local issue that should not be subject to mandate from the state.

The City should support HF 501, which would require arbitrators in public sector bargaining cases to consider the financial conditions of public employers when ruling in arbitration cases.

Arbitrators would also have to consider internal patterns, i.e. when other employees and bargaining have already settled on conditions of employment and wages. Finally, arbitrators could not consider public employer fund balances when determining arbitration awards. In other words, public employers should not be penalized for sound fiscal management. The bill passed out of committee on (I believe) a party-line vote, with Republicans supporting the measure.

The Minnesota Management and Budget Office announced that Minnesota's projected deficit was reduced to roughly \$5 billion, which is \$1.2 billion better than the previous forecast.

Spice Letters

The federal Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) formally criminalized five types of synthetic cannabinoids, known as "Spice," effective March 1. The City sent letters to two businesses in East Grand Forks that are known to be distribute forms of this drug. The letter advises the businesses to voluntarily comply with the new DEA regulations. The City will recommend criminal investigation to the DEA if voluntary compliance is not established within 10 days.

Red River State Recreational Area Campground

I contacted with Flaherty and Hood about possible legislation to increase the City's share of profits, and/or increase the City's expense reimbursement, for the operation of the Red River State Recreational Area (RRSRA) campground. Mayor Stauss and I met with new DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr in February. Landwehr indicated that DNR may prefer legislative action rather than intergovernmental agreement to formalize any additional reimbursements to the City. The deadline for filing new legislation is rapidly approaching. I will update the Council as I learn more about the possibility (or not) of introducing legislation.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Police, Chief Mike Hedlund

Dispatch Center Remodel Update

The dispatch center remodeling project is almost complete. The final touches are being completed this week and the Police Department is planning to transition back into the center on Monday March 7, 2011. The remodeled work space will provide a more effective work space for the dispatchers and officers and the updated technology will allow for more effective and efficient work.

Polar Plunge for Special Olympics

Chief Mike Hedlund will be taking part in the Polar Plunge for Special Olympics in Grand Forks on Saturday March 5, 2011. The Polar Plunge is a fund raiser for Special Olympics in which "plungers" raise money through pledges and donations and then "plunge" into an icy pool of water. The Polar Plunge helps Special Olympics through the fund raising and through increased awareness of Special Olympics and its many valuable programs.

Parks and Recreation, Dave Aker

- 1 - Figure Skating Ice Show is March 19 and 20.
- 2 - We have four teams in Regions fighting for a berth in the Minnesota Hockey State Tournament.

Fire Department, Chief Randy Gust

The new updated flood forecast as of 3/3/11 has us at a 50% possible chance of a 50.4ft level. This is one foot lower than the last forecast. The flood fight personnel have been meeting weekly

and feel at this time we are where we should be for preparation. We will continue having weekly meetings until the need to go to daily occurs. As a note the weather people have stated that we are still in a colder than normal cycle for the month and this may result in a later flood season.

AGENDA ITEMS:

The Council will have several absences next week. As such, the work session agenda will be quite short. Both the Council President and Council Vice President positions will be absent next week. Therefore, the Council should nominate a temporary chairperson to conduct the meeting per section 30.02 of the Code of Ordinances.

- The Public Works Superintendent will present an intergovernmental agreement to participate in the MnWARN system. MnWARN is essentially a mutual aid agreement between several jurisdictions to assist each other as available in storm water, waste water, or water utility emergencies.
- The Public Works Superintendent and the Parks and Recreation Superintendent will present quotes to replace mowers that are well past their useful lives. The quotations, which were received via the State Cooperative Purchasing Venture (CPV) are higher than the 2011 budgeted amounts. Therefore, staff will recommend budget adjustments so that the much-needed equipment replacement can proceed.
- The Parks and Recreation Superintendent will present a quotation for Playground Equipment. The equipment is included in the 2011 Adopted Budget.
- There will be one addition to the agenda to procure a facility consultant for the ongoing library roof issue. This item is not in the packet, but it will be available on Tuesday.