

**APPROVED MINUTES  
OF THE CITY  
COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2018 – Following the Special Meeting**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

*The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for January 9, 2018 was called to order by Council President Olstad at 5:08 P.M.*

**CALL OF ROLL:**

*On a Call of Roll the following members of the East Grand Forks City Council were present: Mayor Steve Gander, Council President Mark Olstad, Council Members Clarence Vetter, Mike Pokrzywinski, Henry Tweten, and Marc DeMers.*

*Jeff Anderson, Assistant Fire Chief; Karla Anderson, Finance 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; Reid Huttunen, Parks and Recreation Superintendent; Gary Larson, Fire Chief; David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer; Keith Mykleseth, Water & Light Manager; Megan Nelson, City Clerk; and Jason Stordahl, Public Works Director.*

**DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:**

*The Council President Determined a Quorum was present.*

**1. Reconsideration of Agreement with NCTC – Henry Tweten**

Council member Tweten asked the Council to reconsider approving the agreement the City has had with Northland Community and Technical College for another year. He commented how the tech school provides training for the local work force which includes training of fire fighters who have done an excellent job for the community. Council President Olstad asked Mr. Brian Huschle to address the Council. Mr. Huschle stated the agreement between the City and the college had been in place for a couple years now, he was surprised when the agreement was not approved, and he was not aware of any issues that may have resulted in the termination of the agreement. He added how the instructor works with the businesses in the area so there is no interference and they were both present to answer questions.

Council President Olstad commented how the Council was looking for consideration for the use of the space. Mr. Huschle informed the Council about the financial constraints of putting on this course because of the equipment that is needed, how a low student teacher ratio is needed for instruction, and they are a state agency and are not allowed to cross the state line. He explained how the truck driving students pay \$289.12 per credit compared to the \$165 per credit for other courses, and when there are fewer than 11 students the instructor takes a cut in pay to allow for the course to continue. He added there are financial pressures from the State and how the maintenance of the parking lot will be done regardless.

Mayor Gander asked if the trucks that are used are empty. Mr. Hamilton said they were empty or carried the parking cones used during the training. Mayor Gander commented how the freeze/thaw cycle does take a toll, at some point the parking lot will need to be replaced, and he doesn't have the answer. He added that this may not change the life of the parking lot but the Council has a duty to the tax payers. Discussion followed about how this section of the parking lot was built for heavier traffic after the flood. Mr. Emery said he didn't think the trucks they are using would have a substantial impact since it is nine inches of concrete. Mayor Gander commented how this was similar to the discussion the Council had about renting the Quonset to the DNR and how the City works with and has partnerships with both entities.

Council member Pokrzywinski thanked Mr. Huschle and Mr. Hamilton for coming in. He stated he is always concerned about one public entity using another public entity regardless of what has happened previously, how the parking lot at the Civic Center was used by the truck driving program, and now that parking lot needs to be repaved which has a huge price tag. He added how they want to continue using another public parking lot. Mr. Huschle commented both entities receive funding from the same State. Council member Pokrzywinski said the agreement may have a chance at being approved if there is even a small amount being offered to help with future maintenance since the City does not currently have a long term funding source for repairs for this parking lot. Mr. Huschle said he appreciated the comments. Council member Pokrzywinski said that Northland was a huge asset to the community.

Council member DeMers said they should be looking long term, come up with the plan on how to replace the parking lot, and how the City may need a buy in from the State or college. He stated they may need to consider replacing the parking lot with seven inches of concrete instead of the nine but whatever is done the Council needs to plan with the future and there will need to be some sort of an agreement for the future. Council President Olstad informed the group he had talked with Mr. Gorte about looking into seeing if there were any types of grants of funding available through the DEED office but he wasn't sure where things were at. Mr. Huschle said they were still looking into things. He added how the College would like their own driving course and that many different groups along with the truck driving program would benefit from it. He told the Council they had reached out to businesses for possible funding but they haven't been able to come up with enough funds for a closed driving course so the idea was not lost on them but it wasn't cheap to do. Council member Tweten commented on all of the funds the City received after the flood, how the College was very fortunate to have the truck driving program, that besides people of the community the College was the biggest asset for the City, and the College creates lots of business for the City.

Mr. Hamilton told the Council when he was asked to take over the program they only had one truck and one trailer with no place to train. He said they still have no place to train but they do have two trucks and three trailers and that in the seven years as an instructor he has worked with over 200 people in this program. He explained in two years time there will be a mandate that all CDL licenses will require training, he hopes the program is still around, and Northland is the only school in northwest Minnesota that offers this training. He explained how he is very committed to this program which is why he takes a pay cut to keep it going, how there is a shortage of drivers currently in the workforce, and they need a place to train. Council member Pokrzywinski said if they start down the road of working out some kind of compensation for the future he would vote for approving the agreement. Council President Olstad stated he had voted to continue this agreement, the City partners with Northland, and he hopes they continue to partner on different things so both entities can continue to grow. Mr. Huschle thanked the Council for their time and hoped for a longer agreement to help ease the pressure on this program.

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

## **2. Consider Change of Scope to 18AJ2 Project – Steve Emery**

Mr. Emery explained to the Council since there is the potential for a round-a-bout to be place at the intersection of Bygland Road and Rhinehart Drive staff had discussed other options for Rhinehart Drive in place of the street reconstruction because of the costs of a reconstruction as well as how a section of the road would be redone if the round-a-bout was constructed. He stated they are looking at completing a mill and overlay to this section of Rhinehart Drive because it isn't as costly and with the savings they could make ADA improvements to the sidewalks on 17<sup>th</sup> Street NW from Highway 220 all the way down to River Road. He added how these improvements have been added when doing projects but it will be a while before work will need to be done on 17<sup>th</sup> Street NW. He then asked how the City wanted to handle the mill and overlay of the section of Rhinehart Drive and if it should be assessed if there is a possibility of a reconstruction being completed in four years. He opened it up for questions.

Mayor Gander told the Council he had talked about this issue with Mr. Stordahl and Mr. Emery and how this change is using common sense. He commented how they were thinking ahead, trying to save money, and he thanked them for that. Mr. Warren Strandell said the round-a-bout keeps coming up which would try to address a problem that lasts for about 20 to 30 minutes in the morning. He stated there were other options, the Council could leave things as they are, and a round-a-bout was overkill because there were no issues at other times of the day. Council member Tweten asked to form a committee to help find funding to put up street lights at this location or to contact the highway department so they can direct traffic in the morning. He added how the construction of the round-a-bout would disrupt people's lives and the business that is located there. Mayor Gander said he appreciated the comments but the Council was not deciding on the round-a-bout, how the soonest that would happen was about four years away, and they were being asked to decide between a street reconstruction and a mill and overlay project.

Council member DeMers stated he did not have a problem with the mill and overlay or the suggestion of the ADA improvements to 17<sup>th</sup> Street and asked if there were any other potential projects. Mr. Emery said there were but not around the same costs which was why staff was recommending the ADA improvements. Discussion followed about what suggestions could be made to help the morning commute, how stoplights are not warranted so the City would have to pay for the lights, how people may feel different if they live in this neighborhood, and all government entities build for the future. Council member Pokrzywinski stated that the Council voted six to one for a round-a-bout which is safer and it may not be preferred but things change over time. Council member Vetter said he would vote no for a round-a-bout if there is a south end bridge built at 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave. Mayor Gander added that a round-a-bout could perform really well but the trouble is with the cost which will be an obstacle.

Mr. Emery asked the Council's opinion of is the mill and overlay should be assessed and because the City owns most of the property there would only be approximately \$35,000 in assessments and approximately half of that would be paid for by the City because of the Senior Center property. Council member DeMers said there is a possibility of assessing the street reconstruction in four years. Mr. Emery recommended paying for the mill and overlay and then assessing the reconstruction of the road in approximately four years. Council President Olstad said okay.

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

Council member DeMers asked to speak about the sales tax since Mr. Strandell was present. He asked how the use tax was paid. Mr. Strandell said he wasn't sure. Discussion followed about how the use tax could affect collections, all collections are done by the State, and then the City is sent the funds.

Council President Olstad asked Mr. Jeff Anderson to address the Council since he had been invited to do so. Mr. Jeff Anderson introduced himself, stated he was an assistant chief with the fire department, and gave a brief overview of how they were able to stop the fire at grain elevator. He explained how the tower truck that was purchased a few years before was a big asset to help put out the fire. He thanked the Council for allowing them to have the equipment they have to help them do their job. Council member Tweten commented how the tower truck can hold up to 1,000 pounds on the platform and it can cover everything at American Crystal other than the smoke stacks. Mayor Gander said he had recently been over for a training, how this group would not talk about the incident, and they were a very professional group. Mr. Anderson stated that Chief Larson and Assistant Chief Jeff Boushee were very proactive when it comes to keeping everyone trained.

### **3. Discussion on Camera Policy – Mike Hedlund**

Chief Hedlund asked if there were any other comments or questions about the policy. Mayor Gander asked when the request to purchase was going to be brought back. Chief Hedlund said hopefully by the next work session.

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

### **4. Request to Purchase Cameras for Police Dept – Mike Hedlund**

This item was pulled from the agenda and will be brought back to a future work session.

### **5. Request to Purchase Two Police SUVs - Mike Hedlund**

Chief Hedlund explained \$74,000 had been budgeted to purchase two new SUV squads. He stated they would replace the 2013 SUV and the 2014 SUV. He added the cost for the SUV completed equipped and striped would be \$33,229.37 per vehicle or \$66,458.74 for both which is what he would be asking approval for the following week.

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

### **6. Request for PeopleForBikes Grant Program – Reid Huttunen**

Mr. Huttunen told the Council the PeopleForBikes program was a grant program for any initiative that would promote people riding bikes. He stated that he would like to apply for a grant to help pay for the trail connection from the Kennedy Bridge to the greenway trail system. He said the current estimate was for \$33,000 and this could help offset that cost. He said he wanted to make the Council aware they are going to be applying for these funds. He added the letter of interest was due by January 19<sup>th</sup>. There were no questions.

### **7. Discussion on Parks & Recreation Commission – Reid Huttunen**

Mr. Huttunen told the Council he had met with Mr. Galstad about a Park and Recreation Commission or Board after the discussion that took place in November. He said it has been suggested to have it as a commission and based on section 4.02 of the City Charter instead of using section 4.09 because that section gives the advisory board authority over all park funding, over park spaces, and did not address recreation. He stated Mr. Galstad recommended using section 4.02 to be able to accomplish what has

already been discussed by the Council for having this group recommend and provide input, and have the Council being the authority over everything. Mr. Galstad added that based on the discussions the Council was looking for recommendations from a board and to maintain authority over the parks and recreation department. He reviewed the setup of the proposed board and how there could be ex officio members included from the different clubs and organizations. He commented how this was just rough draft form and asked for direction from the Council.

Council member DeMers thanked them for the work done so far, how he saw this as an advisory board, and how they need to maybe rework how the Council members fit into the Board because of the terms of the council members. He added to clarify the mayor would make the appointments of residents but the Council President would make appointments of the council members to the board. Council member Vetter said he was reluctant to move forward with this, it would be fine to get input, the commission should only make recommendations to the Council, and how they shouldn't need the section on making an appeal to the Council. Mr. Huttunen said he wasn't tied to any of the language and he didn't have an issue with removing that language. Discussion followed about how this group would be the eyes and ears to help gather input from the users of the parks and recreational programs, how this group could help make recommendations about what might be needed but the Council will have the final say, this is a way to get the community more involved, and the makeup of the board should be done in a way so everyone is represented.

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

#### **8. Parks Job Descriptions & Request to Hire – Reid Huttunen**

Mr. Huttunen informed the Council the job descriptions had come back from Springsted for the Supervisor of Facility Maintenance and Cemetery and the Team Lead of Facility Operations positions. He explained the descriptions stayed the same but some of the language had changed, the supervisor position went from a grade 13 to a grade 14 and the team lead went from a grade 13 to a grade 11. He reviewed the costs of the salaries and benefits for these positions and how the supervisor position came in approximately \$4,500 more than what was budgeted but the team lead position would save about \$20,000 from what had been budgeted. Mr. Huttunen asked to start the hiring process to fill these two positions. Discussion followed at where an internal candidate may be placed on the wage scale and that the practice is to place them on the step that is at least 4% higher than their current salary.

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

#### **9. Request for Additional Materials for VFW Arena – Reid Huttunen**

Mr. Huttunen reminded the Council about the damage to the VFW roof and how it rained inside the building for some time. He explained work was still being done, all of the cedar was removed and replaced with sheet rock, and they were nearing completion. He explained he had met with representatives from Altru to discuss the fitness programs they would like to start in June, how it will be delayed some because of the work being completed on the room, and that they came up with suggestions for improvements for the room use. He said one of the suggestions was to install sports floor which he did receive a quote on but was looking for another since this quote had \$6,500 in freight charges. He continued saying how this space could benefit from a speaker system which could be used for fitness classes or for trainings. He told the Council Altru did not think the two stair steppers were needed at this time but did recommend additional equipment for around \$6,994.00. He recommended using the funds from Altru to pay for these

items which will total around \$41,000.

Mr. Huttunen also informed the Council spray foam insulation was used to get rid of the condensation issue, doors may need to be replaced allowing for better security, and the infrastructure was put in if the City would like to add a floating wall allowing for the room to be split. He added how the office has also been split up into three offices. Council member Vetter asked about the purchase of the turf for the Blue Line Club Arena. Mr. Huttunen explained the turf had not been purchased because of the obstacle of storage, how there may be renovations or expansions done in the future, and after discussing this with Altru they are okay that the turf has not been purchased because they will be able to use the space at the VFW Arena. Discussion followed about how there may be a need to add something to the walls to protect them from hockey pucks and how that may not be an issue because this space will be monitored more and will need to be reserved for use but it is something that is being looked into. More discussion followed about how classes could be held around the same time as different activities in the arena so people will be able to drop off their kids and go to a class upstairs.

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

#### **10. Discussion on Charter Commission – David Murphy**

Mr. Murphy stated how this item has been brought up several times and since the charter commission has not met for many years the recommendation is to have Council authorize staff to petition for the reinstatement of the commission by the district court. He explained they will need to set the number of commissioners and will need names of people to be appointed. Mr. Galstad suggested putting together a list of minimum qualifications for potential commissioners. Council member DeMers that it may be better to leave that to the discretion of the Mayor and the Council. Mr. Murphy said the only limitations there are is what is listed by the charter. Council member DeMers suggested having representatives from each ward and two council members. Mr. Galstad the minimum needed was seven but that there could be as many as 15. Mr. DeMers commented how some boards and commissions allow for people serving from outside city limits but for this he would think they should only be from within city limits. Mr. Galstad stated that was a requirement to serve. Council President Olstad asked about a timeline of getting names back to Mr. Murphy. Discussion followed about asking people and allowing time for them to consider serving on the commission. Mr. Murphy suggested bringing names back to the first work session in February which would be about five weeks.

This item will be brought back to a future work session.

#### **11. Discussion on Distribution of Deer Surveys – David Murphy**

Mr. Murphy had reminded the Council this item had been tabled last year and asked if a survey should be sent out to get the public's opinion regarding the deer population in the City. He explained he spoke with the DNR again and not much had changed in regards to what the City's options were. He stated how there are no long term solutions, limited archery hunts would only reduce the population for a short term, and the deer will still come to the area for the shelter and food supply. He asked how the Council would like to proceed. Mayor Gander said he thought it would be great to send out the survey. Discussion followed about what would be the best way to distribute the survey, to also include a copy of the ordinance that doesn't allow feeding of the deer, and how there have been no complaints reported of deer feeding at this time. Council member Pokrzywinski asked what will happen with the results. Mayor Gander said the Council could decide based on what is received.

**ADJOURN:**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER DEMERS, TO ADJOURN THE JANUARY 9, 2018 WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 7:15 P.M.**

*Voting Aye: Pokrzywinski, Tweten, Olstad, DeMers, and Vetter.*

*Voting Nay: None.*

*Absent: Riopelle and Grassel.*

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David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer