

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2018 – 5:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for Tuesday, September 25, 2018 was called to order by Council President Olstad at 5:00 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 Vice President Chad Grassel, Council Members Clarence Vetter, Mike Pokrzywinski, Tim Riopelle, Henry Tweten, and Marc DeMers.

Nancy Ellis, City Planner; 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; Megan Nelson, City Clerk; and Jason Stordahl, Public Works Director.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:

The Council President determined a quorum was present.

1. Legislative Update – Representatives from Coalition on MN Cities

Mr. Marty Seifert introduced himself and stated he was with the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities which East Grand Forks had been a long time member. He stated the 2018 session was mainly focused on bonding. He said there were some other items such as an appropriations bill and a tax bill, both items were vetoed, but the bonding bill was passed and signed. He reminded the Council that the Coalition gets their direction from the Board of Directors which is made up of mayors and city council members from around the State of Minnesota and how they have about 100 rural members. Mr. Seifert continued saying that something will need to be done to the formula for local government aid (LGA) for East Grand Forks because when more funds are added to LGA East Grand Forks gets less aid so the fact that no money was added might mean the City is better off this year. He said they will be meeting with the House research to see if something can be done so the City doesn't continue to see a decrease when more funds are added.

Mr. Seifert said the next item was for the Public Facilities Authority and how they lobbied for \$167 million for sewer and water projects. He stated they ended up with \$123 million which was a bulk of the bonding bill. He explained they also tried to include a supplement grant program that not included in the final bonding bill and a permit review bill that was line item vetoed by the Governor. He continued talking about the Corridors for Commerce, how they lobbied for \$200 million, they ended up with \$400 million and the main reason for that was because the \$400 million from the previous year was used around the Twins Stadium. He commented how East Grand Forks does qualify for gas tax but cities smaller than 5,000 do not, they asked for \$8.5 million for smaller cities, but that was also vetoed by the Governor.

Mr. Seifert said the constitutional amendment on transportation directive that was being proposed did not pass the Senate so it was not added to the ballot, they were able to get \$5 million in the bonding bill for the business development infrastructure grant, and the last few items were regarding childcare. He explained none of the items were passed or were vetoed and what they have found by traveling the State is that regulations are as big if not a bigger problem than funding for daycare providers. He stated in Lakefield they were being required to have hurricane prevention items in place so there are many providers that are quitting. He told the Council there were 12,000 daycare providers in the State five years ago, it looks like there is going to be 8,000 by the end of the year, and another thousand fewer in another year or two so it is a real problem all over the State. He said that was his report and asked for questions.

Council member Tweten stated how he has served on many committees, boards, and city council over the years and attended lots of meetings in that time. He said East Grand Forks is being punished for keeping up infrastructure and equipment because in the last few years the LGA funds keep decreasing. He commented how this city has management and the surrounding cities keep receiving increases. He explained the legislature didn't approve a single bill but rather they put it all together and towards the end of the session nothing was getting done so the people in the State are suffering. He added they can differ in politics but it shouldn't get personal which is something people need to understand and a lot more can get accomplished when people work together. He said the new Governor and legislature need to start working together to get things done.

Mayor Gander said the City has had good community growth, homes are retaining their value, but in the last two years the City has lost close to \$100,000 each year in LGA funding. He stated they need to figure out what needs to be done to the formula, he had spoken with Senator Johnson about this, and both he and Representative Kiel would be supportive of any effort to try and bring the City's LGA back up. He added if there is a time where he should testify about the loss of LGA he would make himself available to do so and work with the Coalition along with others to try and fix this because it creates a hardship for the residents. Mr. Seifert said he had looked at this and the simplest thing that might need to be done is to be grandfathered in to keep the LGA funds they currently have and then receive inflationary increases which is something that was done many times in the 1990s. He compared East Grand Forks to other cities and how it wouldn't be hard to draft a bill for this. Mayor Gander said the City could put together a delegation for this.

Mr. Seifert reminded the Council the fall conference was coming up and it is at this conference where they set the legislative agenda. Mr. Murphy asked what Mr. Seifert had been hearing about the governor candidates being LGA friendly. Mr. Seifert said of the candidates both are committed to LGA because they both have ties to rural Minnesota. Council member DeMers commented how in the last few sessions it seems there is an omnibus and veto cycle, no one knows what will end up in the final bills, and if there is any type of pressure cities and the Coalition might be able to apply to change this practice. He added how there should be a better process and pass more individual bills because everyone is not better off because of the process they are using. Discussion followed about how there are basic rules that set the structure, it isn't a political process, and to ask the legislators to request these changes when electing their party's leadership. Council member DeMers commented that people should expect and deserve better government and these people need to be held accountable.

Council member DeMers asked if the Coalition has a working group for economic development for rural areas to help keep things local with something like a tax incentive. He added he didn't know all of the ramifications but something might help people get the equity out of their business. Mr. Seifert said they did have a main street initiative to help businesses. Council President Olstad asked if the Coalition still

had economic development division. Mr. Seifert said they did and they were looking for ideas. The Council thanked Mr. Seifert for his time.

2. Request to Update Winter Seasonal/Part Time Pay Scale – Reid Huttunen

Mr. Huttunen reminded the Council the wage scale for the part time and seasonal employees for the summer months had been updated and how he needed to review a few things before he brought this forward for the winter season. He explained the scale was the same as it was for the summer, the only changes made was pay for the refs for hockey because they were losing refs to other cities that paid more, and the second wage scale accounts for the change in minimum wage and would go into effect on January 1, 2019. He added he was trying to keep things reasonable and asked if there were any questions. There were none.

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

3. Update on Absentee Voting for General Election – Megan Nelson

Ms. Nelson reminded the Council that as of September 21st absentee balloting was available at City Hall Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm in the Administration Office. She explained how the application would need to be completed, a ballot would be issued, and voters can either vote at City Hall or take the ballot home with an envelope to mail it in to the County. She added that anyone that isn't able to make it in City Hall can request an absent ballot online, they can register online, and to make sure they give themselves enough time to have the information mailed out and back. She stated all five polling places will be open on November 6th for the general election from 7am to 8pm and if anyone has questions to call the Administration Office.

Mayor Gander asked how would people find out where they vote. Ms. Nelson explained on the City's website there is a VOTE link and by clicking on that it takes people to the elections page that lists the polling places and there is a link to the Secretary of State's site to put in the address to find out where they vote or register. Council member Pokrzywinski asked if there is enough election judges. Ms. Nelson said she did have enough and had a couple alternates, there will be direct balloting seven days before the general election that election judges will be working at, and the hours will be the 8am to 5pm as well.

ADJOURN:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER GRASSEL, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER POKRZYWINSKI, TO ADJOURN THE SEPTEMBER 25, 2018 WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 5:27 P.M.

Voting Aye: Grassel, DeMers, Vetter, Pokrzywinski, Riopelle, Tweten, and Olstad.

Voting Nay: None.

David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer