

**APPROVED MINUTES  
OF THE CITY  
COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS  
TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2019 – 5:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

*The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for March 26, 2019 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 Members Clarence Vetter, Dale Helms, Tim Riopelle, Tim Johnson, and Marc DeMers.*

*Nancy Ellis, City Planner; Steve Emery, City Engineer; Ron Galstad, City Attorney; Paul Gorte, Economic Development Director; Mike Hedlund, Police Chief; 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 A QUORUM:**

*The Council President Determined a Quorum was present.*

**1. Consider Request from War Re-enactment Group – Representative of Group**

Mr. Thomas Huether stated he was the district director for the Boy Scouts and Civil War re-enactor and in May they will be hosting a living history weekend showing what life was like for a soldier in the 1860s along with demonstrations of shooting off muskets and a canon. He asked for permission to be able to use the muskets and canon for this event. Discussion followed about how this event will be held at Heritage Village; they would limit the amount of times things were shot off to what was allowed, and how this event will even include a period baseball game.

Mayor Gander asked how large of an area this would serve. He stated it was primarily for the Lake Agassiz District, which extends east to Fosston and Warroad and extends west to Cando and Devils Lake. He added they are planning on inviting groups from Fergus Falls, Alexandria, and the Fargo area as well. Council member Riopelle asked if this was open to the public. Mr. Huether said it was. Discussion followed about what would be needed for approval.

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

**2. Update on MN Highway 220 Corridor Study – MPO & MNDOT Representatives**

Mr. Jairo Viafara, MPO, explained a study was being completed on the Highway 220 corridor, which was looking at both mobility and access to the road. He stated they were looking at alternatives, reviewing the

safety benefits, what the cost estimates are, and how this plan will be included in the 2045 transportation plan. Mr. Darren Laesch stated he was the planning director for MNDOT District 2, and that this study was to help improve safety along this corridor. He reviewed issues and crash statistics at the intersections of Highway 2 and Highway 220 up to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. He explained four lanes were needed up to 17<sup>th</sup> Street but the traffic volume reduces the farther north and how with the projected higher volumes of traffic the delay at the stop lights at the Highway 2 intersection may be increased from 20 seconds up to 50 seconds in the years to come. He continued saying after looking at alternatives they will keep the traffic lights at the intersection of Highway 2 and Highway 220 and improve the traffic lights at the intersection at 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

Mr. Laesch told the Council the pavement was still good at the intersection at 17<sup>th</sup> Street and they would be making pedestrian improvements for the interim because their preferred solution for this intersection is the installation of a roundabout, which would decrease crashes by 55% and really improve the pedestrian crossing. He added it could have a negative impact on the frontage roads because of medians and trucks not being able to turn a specific direction so they would have to go down a block to get to a business. He commented that it wasn't ideal but it would be a compromise. He added a truck and 53 foot trailer is the vehicles used when preparing this information and it would be able to move through these roundabouts, they just wouldn't be able to turn left at the 17<sup>th</sup> Street intersection.

Mr. Laesch continued with the intersection at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and how they would like to add a roundabout here but this roundabout would not affect the frontage roads. He explained this would help slow traffic down when entering the city and help make the corridor safer for all types of traffic. Discussion followed about the updates that were being proposed at the intersection at Highways 2 and 220, how the proposed roundabout at 17<sup>th</sup> Street would only have one section that would allow for two lanes, and how getting farm equipment and clearing snow out of these roundabouts may be difficult. Mr. Laesch stated the timeline for these projects is about 15 years out and when the time comes for a project the City will also have to agree especially if the City would have to help pay for improvements to the frontage roads. He added they need a long-term plan in place.

Council member Helms said he was confused about the proposal because he thought they were not going forward with any of the roundabouts. Mr. Laesch said they were unable to finish the last meeting because they had run out of time and the plan did include some roundabouts. More discussion followed about how a roundabout on 17<sup>th</sup> Street would affect the businesses along the corridor that have truck traffic and again how the City would also have to be in agreement with MNDOT on what project is completed when the time comes. Mayor Gander stated he had helped contact business owners along the corridor to be a part of the steering committee to help with this process and he thanked those people for participating.

Council member DeMers asked if it was going to be 15 years before the improvements at the intersection of Highways 2 and 220 were going to be completed. Mr. Laesch said they were going to try to complete those improvements in about 5 years and try to include improvements to the stoplights at 14<sup>th</sup> Street in with that project. Council member Johnson asked what years were used for the crash data. Mr. Laesch said it was 2011-2015 because there were issues with the data from 2016-2018. Discussion followed about how the study had not been finalized, comments were still being taken, any comments could be sent to either the MPO or MNDOT, and how there are going to be roundabouts installed by Thief River Falls along Highway 59 so MNDOT will see how well they perform.

This item will be brought back to a future Work Session.

### **3. Consider Extension to MN Public Facilities for Loan Disbursement – David Murphy**

Mr. Murphy informed the Council the time frame for the loan disbursement from the Public Facilities Authority (PFA) needed to be extended because the project has not been completed just yet. He explained PFA is aware of this, it just needs to be approved, and nothing else with the loan will change. There were no questions.

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

### **4. Request for Bids to Remodel Office in Police Dept – Mike Hedlund**

Chief Hedlund told the Council this project had been budgeted for 2019 and the request is to change a conference room into two offices and convert a current desk space into a conference room. He said how one of the current office spaces is in the open and it can be very distracting with people walking by when the person is trying to complete transcriptions. He added that one of the offices would then be used by the Pine to Prairie Task Force because there are currently three officers currently sharing an office. Council member Riopelle asked if the City charges rent for the space used by the task force. Chief Hedlund said they don't because the Border Patrol funds their own people and does not use any of the grant dollars of the task force.

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

### **5. Request for Social Media Consulting – Paul Gorte**

Mr. Gorte stated part of the marketing plan that was completed was to increase the social media presence. He explained since he has not done much with social media that he will work with AE2S on this for under \$1,100 for the year. Mr. Galstad said he had asked for modifications in the contract, which he had also done last time and AE2S had no issues making those changes.

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

### **6. Update on Flood Preparations – Gary Larson & Jason Stordahl**

Mayor Gander informed the Council that flood preparations are well under way, staff had been meeting daily, sand bags are being filled, empty sand bags were available to residents, information to get sand was also available, and the flood hotline of (218) 399-3456 for people who need information. Council President Olstad asked for clarification on the sand and if people had to purchase their own. Mayor Gander said the residents would have to pay for their own sand and be responsible for disposing of their own sand bags. He reviewed how at this time the predicted crest the City was preparing for was 50.6 feet, the gates and pumps are being put in place, and he will be serving as the public information officer. He explained the sequence of closures, how the closures are not necessarily tied to a specific level of water, and when the pedestrian railings are removed from the pedestrian bridges they are considered closed. He continued saying more will be known in the coming days, how much a flood fight has changed since the levee system has gone into place, and what quality protection it provides.

Mr. Stordahl commented how currently there are only outlooks, not predictions of a crest at this time. He added how it has been good weather for melting; things are starting to open up, and once the rivers open up the National Weather Service will start making predictions. He added how they will be coordinating

with Grand Forks when it comes to close bridges and how staff meetings will continue each week. Chief Larson told the Council they had met with the owners along restaurant row about the wall going up, Mr. Thompson was setting up a site so there is one location for all of the flood updates, and this year the floodwalls will be certified which needs to be done every five years. He added a list of volunteers was being made for those that might need assistance. Discussion followed about the process to certify the floodwalls and the floodwalls might only be put up to the 52-foot mark instead of the full wall being put in place.

**ADJOURN:**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON, TO ADJOURN THE MARCH 26, 2019 COUNCIL WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 6:04 P.M.**

*Voting Aye: Riopelle, Johnson, Olstad, DeMers, Vetter, and Helms.*

*Voting Nay: None.*

*Absent: Grassel.*

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David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer