

**APPROVED MINUTES  
OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2020 – 5:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

*The Council Meeting of the East Grand Forks City Council for January 21, 2020 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, Dale Helms, Tim Riopelle, Tim Johnson, and Marc DeMers.*

*Karla Anderson, Finance Director; Nancy Ellis, City Planner; Steve Emery, City Engineer; Mike Hedlund, Police Chief; 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:**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

**PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE TO FIRE CHIEF GARY LARSON:**

Mayor Gander stated he has had a great relationship with Chief Larson since he had been mayor, he was honored to serve along with him, he has taken part in chili dinners and seen the camaraderie within the fire house, and also observed the readiness they have to protect the community for both medical and fire calls. He told Chief Larson he has added equipment in a timely manner, has a great relationship with the townships, kept up with training, added of more technology, and the improved response times. He commented he couldn't thank Chief Larson enough for all of the good that he had done during his years of service both before and while he was Fire Chief. He added he hopes that Chief Larson looks back and is proud of what he had accomplished. Mayor Gander then presented Chief Larson a plaque recognizing his 30 plus years of service to the City.

Chief Larson said it hasn't seemed like 30 years, time has gone by fast, and there are not many individuals that find their dream job but he was able to do that. He said many people have come and gone but working with councils that support public safety and encourage it makes the job easier. He thanked the Council for their support and he hopes it continues for many years.

**OPEN FORUM:**

Council President Olstad stated the open forum was an opportunity for members of the public to address the City Council on items not on the current agenda and items requiring Council action may be deferred to staff or Boards and Commissions for research and future Council Agendas if appropriate. No one came forward for the open forum.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

1. Consider approving the minutes of the “Regular Meeting” for the East Grand Forks, Minnesota City Council of January 7, 2020.
2. Consider approving the minutes of the “Work Session” for the East Grand Forks, Minnesota City Council of January 14, 2020.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER DEMERS, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, TO APPROVE ITEMS ONE (1) AND TWO (2).**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

**SCHEDULED BID LETTINGS: NONE.**

**SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS: NONE.**

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

*Items under the “Consent Agenda” will be adopted with one motion; however, council members may request individual items to be pulled from the consent agenda for discussion and action if they choose.*

3. Consider approving the request to purchase furniture from Norby’s and other related items for the Cities Area Transit Facility utilizing Federal Transit Funds requiring an 80/20 split with the local share being paid for by the City of Grand Forks.
4. Consider approving the request to purchase two fareboxes, a Bus Fare Ticket Vending Machine, Tickets, and supporting software and equipment from GFI Genfare, contingent upon approval from MNDOT, for the local share cost of \$44,000.
5. Consider approving the purchase of a Pronovost PGS-1020TRC Snow Blower from Trueman Welters for a total of \$26,121.16.
6. Consider approving the purchase of two pumps for Stormwater Lift Station 15 from Minnesota Pump Works for a total amount of \$72,928.50.
7. Consider approving the purchase of a Toro Infield Pro 5040 from MTI Distributing for a total amount of \$25,031.60.
8. Consider adopting Resolution No. 20-01-09 authorizing the City of East Grand Forks to participate in the Minnesota GreenStep Cities Program.
9. Consider adopting Resolution No. 20-01-10 appointing election judges and designating polling places for the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER DEMERS, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, TO APPROVE ITEMS THREE (3) THROUGH NINE (9).**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

**ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF REPORTS OF OFFICERS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:**

10. Regular meeting minutes of the Water, Light, Power, and Building Commission for December 18, 2019 and for the organizational meeting minutes for January 2, 2020.

**COMMUNICATIONS: NONE**

**OLD BUSINESS: NONE**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

11. Consider adopting Resolution No 20-01-11 supporting the authority to impose a local sales tax to fund specific capital improvements providing regional benefit, to establish the duration of the tax and the revenue to be raised by the tax, and to authorize the city to issue bonds supported by the sales tax revenue.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER GRASSEL, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER DEMERS, TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO 20-01-11 SUPPORTING THE AUTHORITY TO IMPOSE A LOCAL SALES TAX TO FUND SPECIFIC CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROVIDING REGIONAL BENEFIT, TO ESTABLISH THE DURATION OF THE TAX AND THE REVENUE TO BE RAISED BY THE TAX, AND TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY TO ISSUE BONDS SUPPORTED BY THE SALES TAX REVENUE.**

Council President Olstad explained this process was different than the process for the pool sales tax because the City has to ask for approval from the State before this can be brought before the community for a vote. He added the information will need to be sent to the State to be on the ballot by August 4<sup>th</sup> so between now and then there will be public meetings held, everyone will be invited to make comments and help determine what is needed, and help determine what the projects should be. He said he wanted to make sure everyone is understanding of the process that would need to be followed and asked for other comments.

Mayor Gander stated he is happy to be where they are in this process because the sales tax at the pool will be ending at the right time, there are challenges that are coming up with the ice systems in the arenas, and the ADA and locker room issues need to be addressed. He commented how it had been mentioned this is because of deferred maintenance but this isn't true because for the last several years there has been a plan in place to address building maintenance and prioritize capital improvements as they are needed. He explained they can focus on the ice arenas, they will be considering approving a 2% sales tax for the next 30 years but a plan is being worked on to determine what the percentage and length of time is needed. He added they will be using the next few months to ask for public input and determine what is needed for these facilities for the next 20 to 30 years.

Council member Helms said it was great to see so many people attending the meeting. He stated they are looking at a 25 to 30 year commitment which will tie up the City for a long time and he thinks they could

do something similar by just fixing up the buildings for cheaper. He added what is in front of them he sees as heavily sugarcoated and that bothers him.

Mr. Robert Sauter, 530 7<sup>th</sup> Ave SE, said he was not a hockey person so the arenas would not benefit his family but the repurposing of the VFW Arena would be a huge step to helping with youth sports. He explained his son was in youth football and it was hard for them to practice because of the wet fall so an indoor facility would have been great. He added they participate in wrestling, they are always looking for a space because they currently have one mat that 65 kids use so it could be huge for the wrestling program to be included somehow in this process. He said this project would benefit young families and possibly attract families to the community. He thanked the Council for their time.

Council President Olstad reminded everyone of the upcoming public meetings to gather public input so there would be plenty of time to make comments. He asked again if there was anyone else who wanted to come forward.

Mr. Brian Larson, 834 13<sup>th</sup> St SE, said he serves on the Park and Recreation Commission. He stated he grew up about 20 miles from East Grand Forks and was active in sports. He said growing up he wished he lived in town so he had better access to all of the amenities available in town. He stated he was able to move back to the area and they chose East Grand Forks because of the balance of a small town feel with great amenities and programs that keep his kids actively involved. He added it was a very easy to chose East Grand Forks and others that live here are passionate and care about their hometown, people support each other, and they are willing to put in the hard work to make these future investments successful because they all have East Side Pride. He strongly suggested that the city council vote to allow the arena project to proceed to a ballot measure allowing the citizens the ability to determine the future of the recreation facilities. He added he highly respects the roles and responsibilities the elected officials have taken on but in this instance they should empower the people of the city and let them vote on how their tax dollars will be spent.

Mr. David Fagerlund, 1109 21<sup>st</sup> St NW, told the Council he was opposed to this resolution moving forward. He explained he has concerns about this massive spending the City is proposing, how projects have been done before by asking the power company, but he thinks this is the right direction by allowing people voice their opinion. He stated he had been following this story in the newspaper, how 25 to 30 million would be spent on recreation because of possible deferred maintenance which has now caused a panic and deferring maintenance only makes the facilities obsolete. He said there was an opportunity to rebuild after the flood with the federal and state governments helping out, his experience in business includes earmarking yearly funds for maintenance, and unexpected items to come up so a safety net should be built in.

Mr. Fagerlund said he was in support of building infrastructure and repairing existing properties but the suggestion of spending 30 million to build new rather than to repair old is not being frugal with tax dollars. He continued saying 2% sales tax is a high percentage and people may think twice about where they purchase items. He added he knows the sales tax for the pool will sunset but that leaves the sales tax at over 9% which is too much. He commented on the different businesses that have moved out of East Grand Forks and how lucky the City was able to add a hotel.

Mr. Fagerlund recommended updating existing facilities using budgeted expenditures and then have an effort to raise private dollars that would be matched with State or Federal grants so the project stays within the confines of what could be raised. He said having a long range plan for a want list is what progress is built on but it needs to be planned for because he only heard about this three months ago. He explained there are wants and needs, if you want something you plan for it, and if you need something you find a way to pay for it. He said things have been pushed off for years for others to fix at a later date, they want to fix it now, and he is not against fixing this now but they need to think about this. He asked the Council to table this, wait for six months, do some footwork on where the funding might come from, and to separate the wants from the needs. He said this started with a \$10,000 repair in one of the arenas, the whole system may need to be replaced, but the building does not need to be torn down. He suggested saving funds for a new facility and set up for a five year plan. He continued saying he does not see much growth in the City if this plan moves forward.

Mayor Gander told Mr. Fagerlund that every time this is discussed his concerns will be included. He said there members of the Council that share those same concerns and they will be looking at all of the pros and cons. Mr. Fagerlund said the Council is a competent group of people but sometimes what things look like to the public is different than what is happening. Mayor Gander thanked Mr. Fagerlund for coming in and having a voice of dissent which is not easy to do. He said the Council would like to hear from those that are in favor and those that are not, they appreciate the turnout and the engagement of the community.

Ms. Lisa Brown, 2225 9<sup>th</sup> St SE, stated her concern was if this resolution was not approved the citizens will not get a chance to decide what they would like to do. She said if something breaks down there is no money to work with and then it will end up being paid for by property taxes. She commented she believes this has to go through so the citizens can decide what projects should be done and how much should be spent these projects. She added some people may not be understanding this process and allowing this to go through will give the chance to pay for these projects with a sales tax instead of a property tax. She explained there are some that think this will set the sales tax at 2%, that is not true, it would allow it to be up to 2%, and then all of the citizens come together to put a plan together that is supported by a sales tax.

Council member DeMers clarified that there are no plans to tear down the Civic Center, there would be an addition of another sheet of ice onto the Civic Center, and with the change at the VFW Arena the City would be maintaining the number of rinks it has. He explained this is a rehab project, they are looking at what can be done, he is one that has concerns, it is a long time to commit to, and they cannot start narrowing things down until they get through this process. He added he thinks it will need to be all of the projects or none because these projects will benefit many groups within the community getting everyone on board. He said the City has come a long way with getting the buildings back in shape except for recreational facilities, the Council understands this, and this is a now problem. He commented if this is just an arena project he is not sure if it will pass, there is still a lot of work moving forward, they will need to apply for grants and donations, and the State can still tell the City no. He stated they do not want to redo the park facilities at the detriment to the local businesses and there is a threshold of what people will spend. He added having events in town will also bring people to town so he sees this as economic development tool as well.

Mayor Gander stated there will be a fundraising effort started in the coming months which will include corporate sponsors, naming rights, and he estimated 4 to 6 million dollars raised for those items which

would be an offset to what is needed for a sales tax. He added there more than likely will be a committee formed to help with the fundraising effort.

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

*Voting Nay: Helms.*

**CLAIMS:**

12. Consider authorizing the City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer to issue payment of recommended bills and payroll.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER DEMERS, TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK-TREASURER TO ISSUE PAYMENT OF RECOMMENDED BILLS AND PAYROLL.**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

**COUNCIL/STAFF REPORTS:**

Mayor Gander commented how former Mayor Lynn Stauss has recently had some health issues and asked that people keep him in their prayers and commented on all of the good he has done for the community over the years.

Council Vice-President Grassel thanked Chief Larson for his years of service and for being open to sit through many different things.

Council President Olstad thanked everyone for attending the meeting and the information will be sent out to the residents of when the public input meetings will be held, the work will continue, and to make sure their voices are heard. He also thanked Chief Larson for his years of service.

Mr. Murphy stated he has appreciated working with Chief Larson who made it very easy when it came to emergency management items.

**ADJOURN:**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER GRASSEL, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER DEMERS, TO ADJOURN THE JANUARY 21, 2020 COUNCIL MEETING OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 5:38 P.M.**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

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David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer