

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

**CALL TO ORDER:**

*The Council Meeting of the East Grand Forks City Council for Tuesday, April 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.*

**DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:**

*The Council President Determined a Quorum was present.*

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

1. Consider approving the minutes of the “Regular Meeting” for the East Grand Forks, Minnesota City Council from April 7, 2020.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER DEMERS, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE “REGULAR MEETING” FOR THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL FROM APRIL 7, 2020.**

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

*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.*

Council member DeMers asked to have item two pulled. Council President Olstad asked for a motion to approve item three.

2. Consider approving the purchase of a 2020 John Deere 244L Loader and AMI snow blade for a total of \$106,084 for the Parks and Recreation Department.

3. Consider awarding the annual sewer cleaning and televising project to Johnson Jet-Line for a total of \$64,295.12.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, TO APPROVE ITEM THREE (3).**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

2. Consider approving the purchase of a 2020 John Deere 244L Loader and AMI snow blade for a total of \$106,084 for the Parks and Recreation Department.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER GRASSEL, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER DEMERS, TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF A 2020 JOHN DEERE 244L LOADER AND AMI SNOW BLADE FOR A TOTAL OF \$106,084 FOR THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT.**

Council member DeMers asked Mr. Huttunen if he had received an amended quote and if these prices reflected that price. Mr. Huttunen explained he had received an amended quote for the blade after the numbers were made public, he talked with Mr. Murphy about this, and accepting that quote after the numbers became public was not in good faith. Discussion followed about if the City should save money, have flexibility to negotiate, how the City was originally told the one vendor was not an authorized dealer for the blade, and then was told that was an error. Mr. Murphy stated he spoke with Mr. Huttunen about this situation, it was not fair to come in with a lower quote afterwards, so it did not meet the criteria to be considered. More discussion followed about how these were quotes and not sealed bids, the other vendor could have been asked if they could meet the price, and there was a price difference of about \$4,000 between the cost of the tractor and blade between the two companies. Mr. Huttunen stated the one quote included a five year warranty which had not been included with the other quote.

Council Vice-President Grassel asked what would happen if they asked for new quotes and if that would create a situation. Mr. Huttunen said he was not sure about the blade but the loader was on the Sourcewell contract, the price was good through the end of April, and if they requested quotes again the price may increase by 1.5%. Council Vice-President Grassel said he was okay with what they have and he doesn't feel comfortable accepting a quote after the amounts were public. Mr. Murphy said even though these were quotes the City should expect the best price when they are submitted and he is uneasy taking quotes and trying to negotiate. Council member Riopelle said this was an integrity issue.

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

*Voting Nay: DeMers.*

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

4. Regular meeting minutes of the Water, Light, Power, and Building Commission for April 1, 2020.

**COMMUNICATIONS: NONE**

**OLD BUSINESS: NONE****NEW BUSINESS:**

5. Consider adopting Resolution No. 20-04-26 approving a three year extension to the tax abatement for Valley Golf Association.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER GRASSEL, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER OLSTAD, TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 20-04-26 APPROVING A THREE YEAR EXTENSION TO THE TAX ABATEMENT FOR VALLEY GOLF ASSOCIATION.**

Council member Riopelle asked to change this to a one year extension instead of three year extension because the golf course is going to be opening for the summer and will be able to recoup some costs. Council President Olstad asked if the representatives from Valley Golf were available. Mr. Frost stated they were. Mayor Gander said the motion was for a three year abatement extension, he was in favor of the three year abatement because they may experience a big hit this year and it will take time for them to recover. He added they have done a good job improving the course and their financial situation. He commented how they are a community asset, they lease property from the city to provide a service the community, and this is similar to the Park and Recreation things that are done except it is done by a separate organization. He added again he is in favor of this.

Council member DeMers asked if the City is the only entity allowing an abatement or if the school and county were also participating. Mr. Frost explained the school did not but increased their fee that is paid for use of the course for the golfing program and cross country and the County was not participating in this abatement. Council member DeMers stated he had received the financial documents and asked the Valley Golf board members to explain their profit sharing and stock buyback policies. Mr. Frost said that was set in the by-laws, he would have to look into the buyback information to know what it says in the bylaws, and when stocks are for sale and sold it is a private transaction. Council member DeMers asked for clarification that the golf course was not buying stocks back and how there are funds budgeted for purchasing stocks. Mr. Frost explained when the associated started there were some that spent a lot more than the \$500 standard stock share price, people are not required to purchase stock to be members, it's a public course, and the benefit of having stock is a lower yearly membership.

Council member DeMers stated there was a line in the 2019 budget for profit sharing and why the City should abate taxes if there is profit sharing. Mr. Frost said he has not seen a disbursement of profit to a shareholder, it may have been a performance bonus for the golf course manager, and since he has been on the board he has never signed off on distributions of profits to shareholders. Discussion followed about where revenues from the bar, pro shop, and rental of the banquet room are accounted for. Council member Helms asked if it was included or if they can be reminded how this will be the last time an abatement will be approved and he does agree they will need time to recover. Council member Olstad commented the reason the Council was considering a three year abatement was because they will have paid off a loan and be able to move forward from there.

*Voting Aye: Helms, Johnson, Olstad, and Grassel.*

*Voting Nay: Vetter, Riopelle, and DeMers.*

6. Consider adopting Resolution No. 20-04-27 allowing limited off-sale for restaurants that have been closed by executive order and authorization will expire when the closure of the restaurants expires, is terminated, or rescinded.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 20-04-27 ALLOWING LIMITED OFF-SALE FOR RESTAURANTS THAT HAVE BEEN CLOSED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER AND AUTHORIZATION WILL EXPIRE WHEN THE CLOSURE OF THE RESTAURANTS EXPIRES, IS TERMINATED, OR RESCINDED.**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

7. Consider adopting Resolution No. 20-04-28 respectfully requesting Governor Walz to enact a 60-day extension for residential property tax payers to pay property taxes that meet the criteria without incurring penalty or interest and to create uniformed approach across the State.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER DEMERS, TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 20-04-28 RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING GOVERNOR WALZ TO ENACT A 60-DAY EXTENSION FOR RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAX PAYERS TO PAY PROPERTY TAXES THAT MEET THE CRITERIA WITHOUT INCURRING PENALTY OR INTEREST AND TO CREATE UNIFORMED APPROACH ACROSS THE STATE.**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

8. Consider approving a new hiring process to start a register for the position of police officer.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER GRASSEL, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON, TO APPROVE A NEW HIRING PROCESS TO START A REGISTER FOR THE POSITION OF POLICE OFFICER.**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

9. Consider approving a new hiring process to start a register for the position of administrative assistant/dispatcher/jailer.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER GRASSEL, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER HELMS, TO APPROVE A NEW HIRING PROCESS TO START A REGISTER FOR THE POSITION OF ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/DISPATCHER/JAILER.**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

**CLAIMS:**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

**COUNCIL/STAFF REPORTS:**

Mayor Gander thanked Emergency Manager Jeff Boushee, Public Works, and the Water and Light Department. He said the flood was the 8<sup>th</sup> highest in the City's history and it was a non-event to the residents. He stated how staff got everything in place, they are now in the process of taking everything down, and things are getting back to normal. He explained the river was at 35 feet and dropping, 28 feet should be reached by April 26<sup>th</sup>, staffing was back to normal for the fire department, and flood meetings were no longer needed other than to follow up at the end.

Mayor Gander continued saying how the Governor's Stay At Home order is still in place but people are allowed to be outside. He added how portions of the greenway have reopened for use, the upper trails are open, and lower portions of the trails that are underwater or covered by debris are still closed. He said the pedestrian bridges will be opening soon but will need to be inspected first, boat ramps will remain closed until the rivers are back below flood stage, and it will take a couple weeks before everything is cleaned up. He reminded everyone the Governor suggested people get out to go fishing but they should stay close to home. He said they were able to take a great step in allowing restaurants to serve curbside which will help them and encouraged people to order take out and possibly pick up a beverage along with it. He thanked everyone for their work on this.

Council Member Helms reminded the Council there may be many other businesses that will be needing assistance in addition to the restaurants and bars.

Council Member Johnson commented that Public Works does most of the work on the boat ramps and with everything back open things are great.

Council Member DeMers gave a shout out to all of the common men and women of East Grand Forks.

Council Vice-President Grassel said they need to think about how to approach what will happen if businesses open in North Dakota and not in Minnesota. He added they will need to have a plan in place to help border cities.

Council President Olstad stated he wanted to echo what the Mayor had already said with how the State got new legislation approved regarding liquor licenses. He also reminded everyone that spring cleanup has been delayed until staffing is back to normal at the Grand Forks landfill and it will be announced when it will be happening.

Mr. Murphy said he is proud of staff, they are taking things in stride, and handling things well.

Mr. Galstad said it has been business as usual for him, he can be reached by the phone, and he will be closing on the 7<sup>th</sup> lot in Waters Edge so things are still moving forward with the builder incentives and working with the realtors.

**ADJOURN:**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, TO ADJOURN THE APRIL 21, 2020 COUNCIL MEETING OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 5:37 P.M.**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

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David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer