

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE CITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2020 – FOLLOWING THE SPECIAL MEETING**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for Tuesday, May 26, 2020 was called to order by Council President Olstad at 5:03 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, and Marc DeMers.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:

The Council President Determined a Quorum was present.

1. Request for Outdoor Seating – Justin Larocque & Staff

Council President Olstad stated Mr. Larocque and possibly Mr. Boppre was also available for this discussion. He said to let him know if they have something to add to the discussion or questions and they are trying to do what is best for all businesses. He added they will need to figure out what can be done and what is allowed by State law. He commented how there have been times when ideas have been brought forward but then cannot happen because of State laws. He asked Mr. Larocque to start the discussion.

Mr. Larocque said he had talked with the Administration Office after the regulations were given from Governor Walz. He stated they currently did not have any patio seating; the purpose of his call was to ask if that was something that could be accommodated. He explained he was informed about how public property had been used before for private use and he was hoping to construct a parklet like some restaurants use in Grand Forks. He said with a parklet they would still only have half of the capacity, they would like to construct a parklet to be placed on 3rd Street which would allow them to add an additional four tables.

Council Vice-President Grassel asked if that parking area on 3rd Street included handicap parking. Mr. Larocque said it did not and the area he was looking at was two parking spaces. Mayor Gander asked if Ms. Ellis had any updates to report on. Ms. Ellis said she had not received anything from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) or the Attorney General's office at this time. Ms. Ellis explained MNDOT has specific requirements for right-of-ways, Up North Pizza has MNDOT right-of-ways on both sides of their business, so she reached out to the Crookston Office, and MNDOT is working with the Attorney General's office to see what could be allowed for outdoor seating within the MNDOT right-of-way. She added how MNDOT would permit the City and then the City would permit the businesses.

Council President Olstad asked if these requests would go before the Council each time or have Administration look at the information. He asked if a resolution would be on the next meeting to authorize staff to approve these permits. Mayor Gander said he would like the Council to define the parameters of how they would like to see things, the parameters would be consist with State statute and City ordinances, so when someone applies it can be approved at staff level instead this having to come before the Council for approval. He said they could promote this to the businesses so they all have the same opportunity to capitalize on outdoor seating.

Council President Olstad asked if this was a temporary solution and once the dining areas open would this be reverted back so if they wanted to continue outdoor seating it would have to come back to the Council for approval and use a special permit process. He stated they needed to be clear on this. Mayor Gander commented how the City is going above and beyond since there is no indoor seating currently allowed. Mr. Galstad said it is one thing to be adjacent to an establishment and it is a different issue when asking to add a parklet on a public street. He explained parklets in Minnesota except for a recent exception in a couple cities have been owned by the City in partnership with a business or businesses so it hasn't been limited to just restaurants and bars. He added they have not been designated for use by a restaurant to serve food and beverages and he was waiting on input from the Attorney General's office. He said he was still working through the information and there will need to be specifications on what would be considered a parklet and if the space is conducive for a parklet.

Council President Olstad asked about the sidewalk seating and that it is already allowed. He said they would need to look at parameters for parklets, work with MNDOT, and see what can be done. Mr. Galstad said the premise will need to be expanded to also include the sidewalk to it can be covered by the liquor license and a business would need to submit a map to the Department of Public Safety showing the extension. Council President Olstad stated the extension of a business would need to be contiguous to the establishment. Mayor Gander said the City is trying to complete this front-end work for those that would like to extend out in the public right-of-way.

Ms. Nelson reminded the Council there are 25 places that sell food in the city, only one didn't have any place for indoor seating, the idea was brought up about using city picnic tables, and there were about 20 tables that were available. Mayor Gander stated the City is trying to push the timeline forward allowing people in businesses, he emailed the Governor, and talked to one of his aides about his so they are trying to make things possible for outdoor seating while trying to move up the timeline allowing people to be inside businesses. Mr. Galstad said this conversation has been about bars and restaurants and there are other businesses that could benefit using sidewalks so the request is being made for all businesses. Council President Olstad asked what could be done tonight because they do not have the information from MNDOT. He said Mr. Larocque can start with sidewalk seating and asked what the Council would like to see next week.

Discussion followed about what could be put together for the Council to consider, if a special meeting could be posted, and have information put together for the Council to consider and act on. Mr. Galstad commented Mr. Larocque would have to look into what is needed from the State before starting to serve on the sidewalk. Ms. Ellis said the Attorney General was going to be addressing liquor licenses with the extension of seating out into sidewalks and public places so the City should be receiving information along with the information with the right-of-ways.

This item will be referred to a future meeting for action.

2. Consider State Aid System Revisions – Steve Emery

Mr. Emery reminded the Council this had first come before them on April 28th and the City was over the State Aid mileage by .42 miles. He said MNDOT had asked to have this cleaned up by the end of July. He explained based on the last discussion the only recommendation he was making was to revoke routes 112 and 105 which was 3rd Street NW and 3rd Street NW which would reduce the mileage by .46 which would leave only 210 feet unused. He added the work has continued on the implementation of a quiet zone and if that is implemented the road would have to be closed because it would end up at a dead end. He stated the City would need to submit a resolution to MNDOT with this change. There were no questions.

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

3. Request to Purchase In-car Computers – Mike Hedlund

Chief Hedlund stated he was requesting new computers for the squad cars because the warranty was going to be up at the end of the month. He explained they were good computers, the company was good to work with, but the current computers were reaching their life expectancy and soon any additional issues will no longer be covered by warranty. He stated after looking the recommendation was to purchase Getac F110 tablets for \$22,500 because these tablets do have touch screens, it can be removed from the car if needed, and they are ruggedized. He added this came in under budget because they were expecting this to be closer to \$30,000.

Council member DeMers asked what was looked at. Chief Hedlund said he was not sure because his staff and Mr. Kovar from the IT Department came with this recommendation. Council member DeMers said it seems that some items cost more because words like ruggedized. Discussion followed about the costs of tablets and installation, references were requested for those that have used these tablets, and how these prices include a three-year warranty. Council member Helms asked how long they were going to have these tablets. Chief Hedlund said three years. Council member Helms suggested seeing what a four-year warranty would be so they are covered and asked what will be happening to the current computers. Chief Hedlund said they would be used by the school resource officer and investigators.

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

4. Request for Direction on Grant Application for Greater MN Parks and Trails – Reid Huttunen

Mr. Huttunen reminded the Council how they had applied last year for funds for Phase 1 of 3 for improvements to the LaFave Park area. He explained the Phase 1 project was turned down for funding, the grant cycle is going to open up again, and he asked if another application should be submitted. He asked if an application was submitted he would like direction on what should be included. Mayor Gander commented how when they met with Department of Natural Resources in the Twin Cities and no one remembered the promise to help the City with improvements to the boat ramp. He suggested if they move forward with an application to move forward with the boat ramp and parking lot. Council Vice-President Grassel said he agreed with moving forward with the boat ramp and parking lot but there is work that needs to be done and then this might be cut from the budget.

Mayor Gander asked what details are needed. Mr. Huttunen said he would need to work with Mr. Emery to update some information, they can prioritize the boat ramp which is getting worse each year, the plan

it to have two slips, and if the City is able to get one done the DNR might help with the other one. Discussion followed about prioritizing Phase 2 for redoing the boat ramp, it will be more likely to be funded, and the City was only given broad feedback on the last application.

This will be brought back to a future meeting for action.

5. Discussion on Local Sales Tax & Recreation Improvement Planning – Reid Huttunen

Mr. Huttunen said there was two parts to this item. He explained the loan the City had with the Water and Light Department was paid in full and Ms. Anderson was reviewing the information to make sure all of the costs for repairs were covered. He stated bill was introduced at the State Legislature that would allow local sales tax to be extended for a specific project. He asked for direction from the Council and how if extended, the sales tax could be collected until December of 2021. He added the bill was not approved during the regular session but it could be approved during a special session.

Council President Olstad said it was a great idea but the Council needs to be upfront with the citizens, if this was done it would need to be explained, and could see if this was an emergency situation. Council Vice-President Grassel said he agreed; he is all for getting the rinks fixed, but the Council said the sales tax would go away when the pool was paid for. He added he would like to say yes but that could be harmful for the future. Mayor Gander thanked Mr. Huttunen for being well informed and presenting this as an option. He said the Council need to make the process work and to fund a possible break down by other means. Ms. Anderson stated the City was not eligible for this and the sales tax will need to sunset.

Mr. Huttunen reminded the Council they were still working on the improvement plans and the second survey was available until May 29th. He told the Council they had already received around 400 responses and these survey results will be brought to a work session for discussion. He stated they would use these surveys to work items into the \$13 million budget and use the results to guide the feasibility study. He added how they would like to have a working maintenance plan for both long and short-term maintenance and try to fit maintenance into the budget.

Recreation improvement planning will be brought forward to a future work session.

6. Discussion on Summer Programming & Swimming Pool – Reid Huttunen

Mr. Huttunen stated he was very hopeful the Parks Department will be able to move forward with the current plan; it was currently being reviewed by Mr. Galstad, the insurance company, and the League of Minnesota Cities. He said Phase 2 starts on June 1st and based on what is allowed they could have small pods set up, participants will bring their own equipment, if equipment was shared it will be sanitized between uses, and there are spots for participants to be picked up and dropped off. He explained there would be 15 minutes between to allow the staggering of people dropping off and picking up participants. He added if Phase 3 starts before the end of the season they might be able to hold scrimmages among the different pods because as of now there is no traveling until after August 1st.

Mr. Huttunen said if this was supported a more detailed plan would come before the Council for approval. He stated they are still trying to determine what the fees would be and once approved they will start with online registration and get staff hired. He added they would plan to start on Monday, July 6th and go through August 7th. Council President Olstad asked about the fees and what they normally covered. Mr. Huttunen said the season was 6 to 7 weeks, this would be around 5 weeks, and the amount of time of

activities was cut back to two days a week along and no travel out of town. Discussion followed about what to charge for activity fees, how the number of coaches needed could be more, and how they need to consider what the experience will be. Council Vice-President Grassel asked if school sports were going to start later and if so if they could include another week. Mr. Huttunen said he could look into it. Council Vice-President Grassel said there have been 50 to 60 kids at the school for daycare and there haven't been any issues so it can be done if properly set up. Mr. Huttunen said school sports started on August 17th so another week could be added.

Mr. Huttunen continued with the swimming pool, which is not able to open on June 1st but could potentially open during Phase 3 with a reduced capacity. He reviewed what the reduced capacity might be for the pool, how it was unclear if the features at the pool will be used, and previous employees were asking if there was going to be a pool season. He stated they could do what was necessary and winterize the pool or wait for the State to see if the pool can open and if so they will try to get staff hired. He asked what direction the Council would like to take. Council member Riopelle commented how many cities were winterizing their pools. Mr. Huttunen said there were some cities taking that step and how the pool still have to be cleaned, filled and ran so there were not issues the following year. Discussion followed about how many cities that were going to be closing their pools for the summer and how with what needs to be done the City can wait to decide on how to move forward with the pool. Mr. Huttunen said the Riverside pool is having a hard time finding employees this year so that may be an issue. More discussion followed about not wanting to lose another pool season, that it takes a couple weeks to get the pool up and running, and it would take about three additional days to get it heated and ready for swimming. Council member Helms suggested using June 15th as the deadline to determine what will be done with the pool this year.

These items will be referred to a future meeting for action.

7. Review of COVID Preparedness Plan – David Murphy

Mr. Murphy said he was requesting feedback from the Council about this policy. He stated this was the latest update and how City Hall will be opened up in phases. He stated currently staff needed to work from home when possible, this template has been created by the League of Minnesota Cities and Kennedy and Graven, and he would be working with department heads to customize this for the City. He added he would also be working with the unions on this as well. He asked for questions. There were none.

This item will be brought back to a future meeting.

8. Recommendation for Hiring New Fire Chief – David Murphy

Mr. Murphy said Chief Larson retired in January of 2020, the process was started to fill this position, there were 11 applicants, eight of the applicants were interviewed by the Civil Service, and four candidates were then interviewed by the personnel committee. He stated it was a difficult decision because there were good candidates but the personnel committee has selected Mr. Jeff Boushee as the new chief. He added how the personnel committee allowed him to negotiate with Mr. Boushee and they are recommending he be placed on Grade 21 Step 3 based on his experience and knowledge, which Mr. Boushee accepted. He recommended hiring Mr. Jeff Boushee as the new Fire Chief. Mayor Gander thanked Mr. Boushee for what he had done to get the City through the flood and the pandemic. He commented on Mr. Boushee's attributes and he was looking forward to working with him. He also thanked the Civil Service for their time for completing this process.

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

9. Review of Charter Commission Revisions – David Murphy

Council President Olstad stated a copy of the charter with the proposed changes had been included in the packet, there were some members of the charter commission that were participating in the meeting, and he was going to be asking for input from the chairman of the charter commission. He added he would like to have this brought back to another work session and that if any council members have comments or questions to send them to Mr. Murphy so they can be shared and brought to a meeting. Mr. Murphy thanked the members of the charter commission for the time they spent on revising the charter, and said they were there to answer any questions. Mr. Galstad stated how any questions, comments, or proposals about the revisions should be sent to Mr. Murphy so it can be worked through so any changes can be tracked. He added how there are different ways to revise the charter but if this is revised appropriately there would only need to be one question on the ballot.

Council President Olstad thanked Mr. Beauchamp for his work and effort put in on this task and asked him for his comments. Mr. Beauchamp explained the commission started working on the charter about 16 months ago, they mostly met for an hour one night a month, and thanked all of the members that included Erin Almlie, Sharon Budge, Bill Straw, Jack Robertson, Justin Hecht, Mark Brickson, Pat Jacklitch, Mark Olstad, and Mayor Gander. He thanked Mr. Murphy and Mr. Galstad for their help and input. He also thanked Ms. Almlie, Ms. Budge, and Ms. Jacklitch for their excellent job of correcting grammatical errors. He explained the commission went through the charter line by line, they looked at the intent, and updated it so it was gender neutral. He added they did not change the intent and he would be happy to answer questions.

Mayor Gander stated it had been a pleasure working with Mr. Beauchamp, there were several meetings, and there was a lot that was done outside of the meetings. He thanked the commission for the work they did. Mr. Beauchamp said it was an honor to be on this commission, it was tedious work, and based on the work they did the charter should not need to be changed for a few years. Council President Olstad asked again for the Council to put any comments into writing and sent to Mr. Murphy, this can be brought to another work session, and if needed there is a fifth Tuesday in June so they could call a special meeting if necessary. He thanked the Charter Commission for their work. There were no other questions.

This will be brought back to a future work session.

ADJOURN:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER GRASSEL, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, TO ADJOURN THE MAY 26, 2020 WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 6:43 P.M.

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

Voting Nay: None.

Absent: Johnson.

David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer