

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE CITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2020 – 5:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for Tuesday, June 9, 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 Members Clarence Vetter, Dale Helms, Tim Riopelle, Tim Johnson, and Marc DeMers.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:

The Council President Determined a Quorum was present.

1. 2020 City Project No 3 ADA Improvements & Bus Shelter Replacement – Steve Emery

Mr. Emery explained quotes were requested from three contractors, only one quote was received from Opp Construction, the bid tabulation was done, and the proposed costs were higher than expected. He told the Council the contractors said they were too busy so they did not submit a quote. He reviewed the three proposals that were included for this project and this project was being done to reduce the number of ADA compliance projects. He added he had talked with Ms. Anderson and Ms. Ellis about the costs of these projects and how there was funding available in the State Aid maintenance fund and there were dedicated funds for projects in the general fund. He said if they move forward he would recommend having proposals 1 and 2 completed because proposal 3 was sidewalk work and was not addressing any ADA compliant issues. He asked for questions.

Council President Olstad asked how much more the quote was compared to the estimate. Mr. Emery said for the first two proposals the estimate was \$70,000 and the quote was \$99,000 so around \$29,000 more than the estimate. He commented how it is challenging when only one quote is received because it is hard to know if the estimate was low, if the quote came in high, or if it was a combination of both. Council President Olstad said a unit price in the estimate was \$8 a unit and the quote was \$15 to \$16 a unit and asked about the price of concrete. Mr. Emery said he had used information from January when preparing the plans and specifications, some of this is specialty work, and the Council could wait and request quotes again in December or January. Discussion followed about if the project was large enough, timing could also be a possibility, and by the time it was decided to identify these projects it was late in the year which is why quotes were taken in June. Mr. Emery said in the future they would identify these projects in the fall and bid them over the winter months.

Council President Olstad asked how the project was bid and if there were proposals that had to be done. Mr. Emery said Opp Construction was flexible and the City would be able to pick any one, two, or all

proposals. Mayor Gander stated how Opp Construction has done work for the City before, they have done quality work, and they have been competitive. He said he was concerned about if this would be able to fit into the schedule, if it will be done towards the end of the season, and if it is at the end of the season would it be durable. Mr. Emery reviewed the timelines when each of the proposals were supposed to be done in August and September. Council member Helms suggested waiting and rebidding this project. Ms. Ellis said the bus shelter replacement was something she was waiting on, they were looking at moving the stop, and if this project was not done she will need to inform Cities Area Transit, which will make things more difficult, but she understands this is more expensive.

Council President Olstad asked if there was interest in moving forward with the bus shelter project. Discussion followed about quotes were collected, not bids, and how the consensus was to wait and rebid this project for next year.

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

2. Consider Minnesota Department of Transportation Local Partnership Program – Steve Emery

Mr. Emery said the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) has a program for maintenance on trunk highways in their system. He explained how MNDOT would cover the costs of construction, oversight, and staking of the project. He stated he had reviewed this with Mr. Stordahl, the proposed project was sent to MNDOT, and it was approved. Mr. Emery stated the proposed project included a mill and overlay of the street by the Sorlie Bridge, the removal of the stamped concrete and replace with concrete that was striped, another section of mill and overlay on 4th Street NW, and sidewalk improvements. He reminded the Council MNDOT would cover \$237,157 of the project and the remainder of \$53,889 could be paid for out of the State Aid maintenance or construction fund. He asked if there was interest the plans and specifications would need to be prepared, it could be bid in December or January, and would be completed in 2021.

Mayor Gander said he agreed the stamp concrete needed to be removed and asked if it could be replaced with a tinted concrete. Mr. Emery said he could check. Council member Johnson commented how nice the tinted concrete looked in Grand Forks. Council member DeMers stated the stamp concrete was distinctive and asked what the pavers were going to be replaced with. Mr. Emery said it was going to be pavers. Council DeMers asked if the City had the final say to complete the project. Mr. Emery said the City would have the final say. He added how this area was not on MNDOT's plan to be addressed in the next ten years. Discussion followed about how the crosswalk between Cabela's and the movie theater may not be replaced if this project is done, how the City will ask to keep that as a crosswalk, and the down town businesses do not want this project done this year with everything else that has happened.

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

3. Review of Results of Survey for Parks & Recreation Facility Planning – Reid Huttunen

Mr. Huttunen stated the survey results and comments had been included in the packet. He explained what they found is the overall answers were very similar to the user groups that completed the survey but there were a couple differences. He started reviewing statistics, there were 443 responses, 387 survey takers lived in East Grand Forks, and these surveys could be broken down into users of different sports, spectators, and businesses. He continued with the first question, which asked if they would support a 1% sales tax, 53% of the respondents would support a 1% sales tax, and a higher percentage said maybe than

in the first survey. He added based on the comments people are waiting to see what will happen, the survey included information about the sales tax was not going to be voted on in 2020, and some comments are showing people will wait to see what the project will be.

Mr. Huttunen continued saying 67% of respondents used the facilities at least once a month, 35% would use them more if improvements were done, and 32% said maybe would use them more so they could be waiting to see what the project would be. He stated more with 42% of survey takers would like to see ice year round, 52% would like to see ice available longer by starting sooner and going longer, and having ice available longer is something the City might want to look into further. He added 68% of the respondents would like to see the City host more tournaments, which was something that was brought forward before.

Mr. Huttunen stated the next part of the survey was questions on the different facilities and there were more questions about the ball fields because it had not been included in the first feasibility study. He explained the top response was to see improved drainage on the current fields and the second was for renovated restrooms and concessions. He commented how there is an underlining message from this survey that most people would like to fix and improve the current facilities by taking the responsible approach and fix what the City already has. He added improving the drainage on the grass field is an attainable goal for them.

Mr. Huttunen reviewed how improvements to locker rooms and fitness areas were most important to the user groups at the ice arena, building accessibility was high on the list for the Civic Center, and the business community would like to see community rooms at the arenas, which was different from the rest. He said joining ice arenas was lower on the list of priorities. He stated the comments about the VFW Arena was to repair the roof, paint, and from all groups the most important was the parking lot improvements. He stated the comments about the Blue Line Arena was to add a heated seating area for viewing and make it more welcoming.

Mr. Huttunen said there were questions about the multi-purpose facility and the highest rated was having year round access for jogging and walking in a temperature controlled facility. He explained this was something that was underutilized in the current facilities and with the new boiler system at the VFW Arena it is kept at 52 degrees year round, it is comfortable in the winter, and with more advertising and access to the facility that could be something to meet the need of the community. He continued with field sports and having access to indoor turf came in at third for priorities.

Mr. Huttunen told the Council no questions were included about the ice plant at the Civic Center, it was asked about for the VFW Arena, but it was left out because the ice plant needs to be replaced at the Civic Center. He reminded them the question was asked about the VFW Arena because in the feasibility study the arena was not going to remain an ice rink and based on the responses the Council will need to consider keeping this an ice rink. He asked for questions, if there was more information they would like to see, and direction on what they would like to see next in the planning process. He said he would like to bring an amended feasibility study back to a work session in July with projects to fit within the budget of the 1% sales tax.

Council President Olstad said in the last few months it has become apparent the vote on the local sales tax would not happen until 2022, this has given staff time to look at what the needs are, and requests from the community. He said the local sales tax was ending very soon. Ms. Nelson commented a notice had to be sent to the Department of Revenue at least 60 days before the end of the quarter to end the collection of

the sales tax so she believed the sales tax would end on September 1st. Council President Olstad stated the pool was going to be paid off early and it was nice to receive input from the community on this project. He thanked Mr. Huttunen for the work he has done on this. Mayor Gander also thanked Mr. Huttunen for listening to everyone and for trying to make the facilities available and appealing to the community. He added they are trying to maximize the City's assets, commented again how the soonest there could be a vote on a sales tax would be 2022, and told Mr. Huttunen to keep up the good work. Council member Riopelle commented how they need to be cognizant about getting the ice plant done at the VFW Arena. Mr. Huttunen commented how they are very worried about some of the components of the plant, they can work on getting replacement parts, redoing this arena will cost a couple million dollars, and if some of these parts are replaced they will not be reusable but they will keep the plant going until it is replaced. Council President Olstad said to keep the pulse of the community, look at what might need to be done at the VFW Arena, and they can look at this again in July. He added that if any of the Council has questions to reach out to Mr. Huttunen or the Parks office.

This item will be brought back to a future work session.

4. Review of Charter Commission Revisions – David Murphy

Council President Olstad reminded the Council of the timeline and the information needed to be to the State by July 7th. He said there were no questions at the last meeting, and he is trying to give the Council ample opportunity to make a recommendation or ask questions. He added this is an important document, they should not rush through it, and if needed it can be sent back to the Charter Commission for review of questions so they have one document moving forward. Mr. Murphy commented how there were two charter commission members that were a part of the meeting. He said this document would be reviewed one more time for grammatical errors. He thanked Ms. Almlie, Ms. Budge, and Ms. Jacklitch for their work on correcting the grammatical errors. He asked Mr. Beauchamp and Ms. Almlie for comments.

Mr. Beauchamp reminded the Council the charter commission met for about 16 months, they met once a month for usually an hour at a time, they did their homework between meetings, and he thanked Mr. Murphy and Mr. Galstad for their guidance during this process. He asked if there were any questions.

Council member DeMers thanked the commission for the work they did, he has wanted to get this done for some time, and he was sorry he did not send his questions out sooner. He asked to have the words Mayor and Council capitalized throughout the document. He then asked about section 2.03, he agreed with the intent, but there may needs to be a change with who is elected during the different years. He continued with suggesting a wording change in section 2.04, remove the Mayor as the head of the police department in 2.05, and asked why a line was removed in 2.06 and that was as far as he had gotten. Mr. Beauchamp asked to have all of these questions in writing so a charter commission meeting could be arranged and they would be able to address these questions. Council President Olstad said they would like to have all proposals to go back through the commission and would like them in writing for the commission to review.

Mayor Gander asked if there is a philosophical divide between the Council and the Charter Commission. He commented how the mayor has a unique role being in charge of the Police Department with the Police Chief reported directly to the Mayor. He added how the Police Chief would report to the City Administrator for day-to-day operations, which was a hybrid system they had come up with. Council President Olstad said the review took a lot of time, they did get input from Chief Hedlund, and there is a good balance with the hybrid system. Chief Hedlund stated he was comfortable with the hybrid system.

Council member DeMers asked where the language was for the hybrid system, they expect accountable from the Chief, but they also expect accountability from all department heads. He asked why this was vested in one person rather than the Council and this was nothing personal against Mayor Gander.

Council President Olstad said the deadline is June 23rd to get this done, they may need to call a special meeting, and the charter commission will need time to review things as well. Council member DeMers said he had requested information throughout this process and he will get his questions into writing. Mr. Murphy asked for all information sent to him by noon on Friday. Mayor Gander said they would also need to set a charter commission meeting. Ms. Almlie said what they were looking at could have been an old version of the charter and read section 2.06 of what the language had been changed to. Discussion followed about how there had been multiple versions of the charter, questions needed to be submitted for review, and Mr. Murphy was going to send out the newest version with all of the changes to the Council. Council member Vetter said he had sent in a concern and asked why 6.14 was eliminated. Ms. Almlie said she thought it was eliminated because it was already a State Statute so it was something the City already has to follow. Council President Olstad said a new copy will be sent out and they will go from there.

This item will be brought back to a future meeting.

OTHER:

Mayor Gander asked if they could trust someone that swore to an oath, he read the oath of honor and the oath of office that police officers say when they are sworn in for their position in East Grand Forks. He said it is the promise officers make every time they put on their uniforms and perform their duties. He said he did not find anything objectionable about either of the oaths and he is dedicating to living up to them himself. He said he was in solidarity with the police officers as they serve according to both of the oaths and he will oppose anyone seeking to defame them. He continued saying any effort to defund or dismantle the police department is a foolish attack on the constitution and way of life. He stated it was a defense of lawlessness and anarchy; it would put citizens in great peril, so he would never be part of such an effort. He guaranteed every police department in America is founded on similar principles and in troubled areas they need to tie back to these principles rather than dismantling police departments. He stated to the 1% or so of police officers that do not subscribe to the standards in the oath of honor and the oath of office, they need to get in line or find another career. He thanked the 99% or more for keeping the community safe and for making sure people behave themselves.

ADJOURN:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, TO ADJOURN THE JUNE 9, 2020 WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 6:28 P.M.

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

Voting Nay: None.

David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer