

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE CITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2020 – 5:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for Tuesday, July 14, 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.

1. MNDOT Demers Ave Traffic Light Replacement and ADA Work – Steve Emery

Mr. Emery reminded the Council this project had been discussed earlier in the year and that the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) was considering a traffic light replacement project along Demers Ave at the intersections of 2nd Street and 4th Street in 2024. He stated MNDOT's project cost estimate at this time was \$700,000, the City would be responsible for the local streets, and would have 50% of the traffic signal project costs. He continued saying the last time this was brought forward the Council had asked what funds were available in the State Aid accounts so he prepared a summary of what projects are coming up in the next five to six years. He said the maintenance funds are sent to the City and can be utilized anywhere on the street system and the construction dollars need to be requested from MNDOT in order to be used. He added some of these funds can be moved if needed, this will be a living document, and things will more than likely change some from year to year.

Mr. Emery informed the Council he reduced the yearly amounts of both the allocation and maintenance dollars the City receives by 20% for the next two years based on a recommendation from MNDOT due to COVID because it has changed things for the State. He said MNDOT would be looking for a resolution of support from the City for this project that shows the City is responsible for 50% of the traffic signal project costs. He added the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was working on a downtown transportation study for both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, the work is ongoing, and they have identified the need for interconnected traffic signals between the two downtowns to help the flow of traffic. He stated there was also an adaptive system that could be used and how signals could change based on current traffic flows. He said Mr. Haugen from the MPO suggested including language showing the City supported an interconnected system to help with the flow of traffic. He asked for questions.

Council President Olstad said the City's cost was estimated at \$350,000 and asked if this project would cost more to have an interconnected system or if that was already included in the estimate. Mr. Emery

said he would need more information from MNDOT, Mr. Haugen from the MPO had received a letter saying the system that will be installed will have elevated capabilities that may not require adaptive signal control measures, and how they will also consider interconnecting the signals with fiber if available and determined as necessary. He added he was not sure what they would be doing for these systems, suggested supporting up to \$350,000 for the project, and include support for interconnecting the systems. Council President Olstad said they want to make sure there was good traffic flow and asked if a cost for this could be determined. Mr. Emery said he would contact MNDOT and find out. Council member Riopelle asked if Grand Forks already it installed on their new system. Mr. Emery said their traffic lights were interconnected. Council member Johnson said he would be in support of the interconnection for emergency personnel and should be a priority and other traffic would be secondary. Mr. Emery said he would reach out to MNDOT to find out more information and would have it for next week.

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

2. Request for Filling Positions in Public Works – Jason Stordahl

Mr. Stordahl informed the Council the lead equipment operator was retiring and his last day would be September 20th. He stated he would like to promote from within Public Works to fill this position from the current operators. He explained that promotion would create an opening for an operator, which he would like to fill from within with a truck driver, and that would create an opening in the truck driver position, which he would like to fill with an internal and external hiring process. He added he would like to have these positions filled before winter and was requesting to start the hiring process. Discussion followed about how a similar process was being completed in the Fire Department, there would be time to get things done in a timely manner by the Civil Service, and the Civil Service do participate with promotions and would be conducting interviews for the truck driver position. Mr. Stordahl told the Council the Civil Service was informed of this request already by staff so they are aware of what could be coming up.

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

3. Update on Greater MN Parks & Trails Grant Application - Reid Huttunen

Mr. Huttunen stated there was an updated cost estimate for work in LaFave Park. He said the grant application is due at the end of July, in late May they considered moving forward with work on the boat ramp, and how it seems to get a little worse with each flood. He explained the estimates included in the packet focused around the area of the boat ramp and ranged from just putting in a new ramp to removal of the current ramp to replace with a two-ramp system and parking spaces from the master plan. He stated based on previous discussions the bituminous parking lot would remain as gravel but possibly add in curb and gutter. He added this would be similar to the launch space by the Red Lake River boat launch, which handles floodwaters very well. He continued with the fourth estimate which was for a mill and overlay on 1st Street that goes past the softball and football fields. He stated in the last few weeks they were looking at if this needs to be a through street and instead of milling and overlaying the entire street it could be changed to a dead-end street and end with a turn around by the football field which would be a cost savings and what the estimate showed. He added if they would like to mill and overlay the entire street it would add approximately \$35,000 to the cost.

Mr. Huttunen continued saying there were four prices in front the Council, the grant application currently includes a 25% match for the addition of a boat ramp and the mill and overlay of the street. He told the

Council the application needed to include how this will help connect people to the outdoors and attract new people. He said the total project cost was approximately \$450,000, which would make the local match around \$117,000 and this would be budgeted in 2022 and 2023 based on the grant contract period. He asked for questions or comments and if they were moving forward with a project, he would like to bring it forward at the meeting the following week.

Mayor Gander said this was a sensible package, it reflects the highest needs, and the use of this area will increase with improvements so this is a good first step. Council member Helms asked for a breakdown for the cost of the boat ramps so he can see how they came up with that estimate. Council member Riopelle asked if this was a one-time grant opportunity or if the City could apply again. Mr. Huttunen said the City can apply on a yearly basis and the City was expecting funding from a 2018 application, the funds were just now being approved by the Department of Natural Resources, and the funds were for a kayak launch. He added they could apply each year as long as there was funding available.

Council member DeMers said there were many options and asked what options were being proposed. Mr. Huttunen said he was proposing the addition of one new boat ramp, which was the first estimate in the packet along with the mill and overlay of 1st Street, which was the fourth estimate. He commented he would not be moving forward with the other projects at this time unless the Council would like to have them included. Council member DeMers asked about the placement of the new boat ramp. Mr. Huttunen said the plan would be to place it just to the south of the current ramp as it is shown on the master plan. He stated if they continue to apply for funding, they could try to get funding and fix the other ramp. Council member DeMers asked what kind of funding was needed to add a ramp and fully upgrade the lot. Mr. Huttunen said that information could be put together. Mr. Emery said one of the estimates included boat ramps and the parking lot area so if they pulled \$125,000 for one of the boat ramps it would be a close estimate.

Mayor Gander asked if this was going to be everything plus the addition of asphalt. Council member DeMers said just the curb and gutter. Discussion followed about what minimal parking lot work was, how it would need to be done to get to the new boat ramp, and how there is more for mobilization cost estimated for that in the estimate. Mr. Emery said he would be able to provide an estimate with just one boat ramp, gravel parking lot, and curb and gutter to get to an actual number. Council member DeMers asked what the access road. Mr. Emery said it was the connection from Hill Street to 1st Street and how that might be able to be changed to gravel instead of being paved which would be a cost savings. Mr. Huttunen said they were trying to provide a few options so the Council could determine how big the local match they would feel comfortable with. Council President Olstad asked when the last time there was maintenance work done to 1st Street. Mr. Stordahl said he was not sure because it was before he worked at the City. Mr. Emery said nothing has been done in this area since after the flood.

Council President Olstad asked if Mr. Huttunen was clear with the project. Mr. Huttunen asked if everyone was okay with what Council member DeMers was suggesting and if so the information could be updated and provided at the next meeting. He said he would also need to know how much of a match the Council is okay with moving forward with. Council President Olstad asked if this was going to include the mill and overlay area and asked to have that clarified. Mr. Huttunen explained the road that connects Hill Street to 1st Street was not included in one estimate, it was included in another, and if this road is graveled instead of mill and overlaid there would be a cost savings. Council President Olstad stated he had talked with Mr. Huttunen and they have to be careful because only 40% or less of the grant can be used for road access.

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

OTHER:

Council member DeMers asked when they will start talking about the budget and when they will start getting information. Mr. Murphy said the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report should be completed in about a week. Ms. Anderson said they were starting the process, staff can start working on the budget, and she was working on getting information to the department heads so it was up to the Council. She suggested the first work session in August. Mayor Gander said the sooner the better. Mr. Murphy said the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities sent out information saying the revenues have come back up for the State, there is a potential still for a deficit, but the numbers are going in the right direction so as more businesses open it will only get better. Ms. Anderson added there was going to be an increase of over \$500,000 to the fund balance. Council member DeMers asked about the COVID funds and if there was a plan to discuss it. Ms. Anderson said she was still waiting for guidelines from the League on Minnesota Cities. Mr. Murphy said staff has been tracking items that could be reimbursed by the COVID funds.

ADJOURN:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER HELMS, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, TO ADJOURN THE JULY 14, 2020 WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 5:37 P.M.

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

Voting Nay: None.

David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer