

**APPROVED MINUTES  
OF THE CITY  
COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2020 – 5:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

*The Council Meeting of the East Grand Forks City Council for Tuesday, October 27, 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. Update on MNDOT Local Partnership Program Project – Steve Emery**

Mr. Emery reminded the Council how this item had been discussed at the October 13<sup>th</sup> Work Session and he followed up with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) with the suggestions the Council had made such as adding pigment to the crosswalks. He explained MNDOT had some concerns with these changes because of the traffic control project that is being planned for 2024 which included ADA improvements so they were recommending for this project to proceed as originally planned and look into thermoplastic pavement markings in 2024. He said these areas need to be addressed and they cannot wait four more years so he was recommending to move forward with regular striping and include beautification with the 2024 project. He asked for questions. There were none.

**2. Consider 2021 ADA Improvement Project – Steve Emery**

Mr. Emery said this past summer the City received quotes for ADA work throughout the City, the bids came in higher than anticipated, and the bids were rejected. He said the bus shelter pad was going to be installed and would include some sidewalk work. He stated the request was to get this ready to go out for bids this winter to try to get better pricing. He added Options approached the City and asked for ADA improvements by the Louie Murray Bridge, which were going to be included with the ADA project. He reminded the Council how the City has committed to completing ADA improvements and progress needs to be made so the City does not miss any future funding. He asked for authorization to prepare plans and specifications for the 2021 ADA improvement project. There were no questions.

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

### **3. Discussion on Utility Infrastructure Replacement with Major Street Reconstruction or Replacement – Mayor Gander**

Mayor Gander stated things are getting closer to the possibility of major reconstruction or street replacement of 20<sup>th</sup> Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He explained more things were coming to mind including the utilities under the street and there was tentative approval from the Water and Light Department to replace the watermain in this area in 2021 if the project moves forward. He said there was also storm and sanitary sewer in this area that ranged from 47 year old to 50 years old and it did not make sense to redo the street and place it over 50 year old utilities that was starting to fail. He said how this could seem like an unfunded mandate for those that would be paying for the project. He asked if the Council could clarify the street replacement policy so it would be done the same in each reconstruction project moving forward.

Mayor Gander told the Council storm and sanitary sewer are typically 100% assessed to the adjacent property owners but there had been some cases where the City has fixed smaller areas that have failed using city funds. He added there was one big project that was completed in 2008 which included storm sewer, sanitary sewer, watermain, and paving and all were paid for by the City. He commented how things have been done differently and he would like to see what the Council would prefer and see if there was any consideration to pay for the utility replacement and up to 10% of the paving. He said there were some ideas for funding sources such as enterprise funds for the replacement of the utility and State Aid maintenance dollars for a percentage of the paving. He added they were limited on what the enterprise funds could be used for and it would be good to have this decided so it can bring clarity to the residents.

Mayor Gander asked if a policy should be set requiring utilities to be replaced under new or a reconstructed street and if so, what age the utility would need to be in order to be replaced. He stated 40, 45, or 50 years would be reasonable to him. He commented having to take up a street three years after it was reconstructed because of the utility failure would be because of bad planning and they can do better. He said the ability to plan and anticipate failures could help prevent big problems down the road. He asked again if the Council would like to require the replacement of utilities if it is over a certain age on a major street reconstruction or replacement and they would need to determine what the funding mechanism would be. He added this would be more in line to what the Water and Light Department was already doing. He said Council President Olstad had concerns about if this was done and if there would be funds available for the next street replacement down the road without burdening the residents. He asked Mr. Stordahl and Mr. Emery for their comments.

Mr. Emery stated they were trying to make these projects affordable for residents and reminded the Council how special assessments need to pass the special benefits test. He said by using funding sources other than just special assessments could get these projects in line and have less issues in the future with appeals. He commented this seemed like a good solution they would bring forward for consideration and if this moved forward the special assessment policy would be revised.

Council Vice-President Grassel asked where all of the 40 to 50 year old storm and sanitary sewer was in East Grand Forks. He added the last time he remembered a big project like this being done was by Stauss Park about 50 years ago. Mr. Emery said they have infrastructure maps that show when the utilities were installed. Mayor Gander said this started with a failed street. Mr. Stordahl said there had been discussions about putting a process in place for replacing some of the older sanitary and storm sewer lines in a similar way the Water and Light replaces watermain. He said they could replace the oldest stuff or use different criteria to determine what would be replaced so each year a certain amount of sewer line could be replaced. He added in this case it would be replaced because the street was being redone and it would be nice to

have a program to replace old sewer lines. He commented how the really old sanitary and storm sewer was taken out after the flood but it has been over 20 years and the northeast side of town would more than likely be where they start because it is an older section of town.

Council member Vetter said this was already being done in his experience. He said the utilities are being looked at when it comes to a street replacement and replaced if needed. He added he does not see a reason why a 50-year-old storm sewer would need to be replaced if everything was working fine and they are doing their due diligence by televising the lines each year. He said he did not see a reason to change and if the citizens that live along 20<sup>th</sup> want to redo the road the utilities can be checked and if they are not failing then they do not need to be replaced. He stated in his opinion they do not need to change anything.

Council President Olstad asked if the lines around 20<sup>th</sup> had been televised. Mr. Stordahl said they were recently done and both storm and sanitary sewers would need to be replaced. He explained the locations of where the sewers were located and work will need to be done regardless if the street is redone or not. He said if the street was not redone, they would need to prioritize the projects. Council member Helms said there were three spots in downtown Grand Forks that were tore up after major projects were done. He stated he did not know what was going on but it did not look good. He asked if there was a guess on how long sewers were supposed to last. Mr. Emery said 40 to 50 years was a good estimate, they many get more or less out of them, but that would be a good time to start looking at what may need to be replaced. He added if a street was still in good condition there was a possibility of relining the sewer lines and with 20<sup>th</sup> Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue with the street needing to be replaced, it would be more feasible to replace the sewer lines.

Council member Helms asked why more utilities were located under the street and not in the berms. Mr. Emery explained there was not enough room or enough space to meet all of the necessary requirements for the placement of some of the utilities. Mr. Stordahl said the sanitary usually goes down the center of the street, 20<sup>th</sup> Street was a little different, but if the sanitary sewer line was located on one side of the street instead of in the middle there could be potential issues for home owners. He explained the property owners are responsible for their private line up to the connection to the main line and some property owners would have twice as far to go if the sanitary line was only located on one side of the street so their costs would be greater.

Council President Olstad asked if they move ahead with the plan to use enterprise and State Aid funds how far out would they need to project out to allow enough funding to be available. He added there were other projects that were going to be taken care of through State Aid funds that have been scheduled so how would those funds be dedicated for street replacement. Mr. Emery said every year in January the City does received State Aid maintenance dollars, 25% of those funds can be used on local streets, and the allocation dollars have to be used on the State Aid system. He stated there was a spreadsheet that showed when the funds would be received along with the scheduled projects to make sure there were sufficient funds available. Mr. Stordahl told the Council they would need to come up with a plan when it comes to the enterprise funds, they can look into what other cities do, and determine what could be done.

Ms. Anderson said the Water and Light Department set aside approximately \$500,000 each year for watermain replacement. She explained that was budgeted each year and at this time the fees would need to be reviewed to consider increases for projects. Council President Olstad said at this time they would need to find a funding source to make up the cost of the projects, which would increase the fees on the Water and Light bills. Ms. Anderson said that was correct. Council member DeMers said he has wanted to treat the streets like an enterprise fund and try to do what the Water and Light Department does with

their utilities. He stated he was in favor of coordinating projects so things do not have to be redone. He explained this proposal is the worst of both of these by trying to fund a street project using enterprise funds that have specific purpose instead of using special assessments. He commented the Council President had the right to question what the impact would be. He added the watermain line on 20<sup>th</sup> Street would not affect the street at all and the sanitary sewer is mostly located in back yards. He said he was not sure how much this would help on the project for 20<sup>th</sup> Street but there would be other areas where there would be a big change.

Mayor Gander said as the next step was being taken to bring information back to the neighborhood information became available there were issues with the storm sewer, which were significant and how that would affect the street project. He stated that caused them to stop and consider everything because if some of the utilities were starting to fail that could be difficult to put that all on the residents. He added if there was a smaller repair for the storm sewer, it would be covered by city funds but these utilities were all the same age and have started to fail so it would be better to fix the problem. He asked Mr. Stordahl based on the scope of the work for the storm sewer that it would not be specially assessed. Mr. Stordahl stated if the street was not replaced, there were some sections of storm sewer that would need to be repaired, the extent of the repairs is not known yet, and they would be paid for using enterprise funds.

Council President Olstad said rates would need to be reviewed before it is determined what can be done because if rates increase by a large percent that is a big deal. He asked how they look a rate increased based on different projects because the needs will be different for each project. He added that would be hard to plan for, setting the rate for a project may cause issues down the road, and that would be difficult to project. He asked what the amount that would be used out of the enterprise funds for this project. Mayor Gander said it was approximately \$250,000, which would come from the enterprise funds. Mr. Emery said the estimate for storm sewer was \$213,000 and another \$63,000 for sanitary sewer so the new total was \$276,000. Council President Olstad asked what happened if the costs doubles in a future project and how they would come up with the funds or have to adjust rates again. Mayor Gander suggested allocating a certain dollar amount each year and if there were a bigger project they would need to wait until the funds were available. Discussion followed about setting aside a certain dollar amount and how that would affect rates as well as residents and how this item should be brought back once they know how budgetary impacts could affect citizens.

Mr. Murphy stated it was his experience when enterprise funds were used the amount that is collected each year was acceptable, realistic, and feasible. He said depending on how much was collected each year determined what project could be done by utilizing enterprise funds and assessments. Mr. Galstad said he agreed with Mr. Murphy and they needed to determine what was allowed by State statutes because the statutes dictated what is allowed to be collected so they need discuss everything together. Mayor Gander suggested bringing this back to a future meeting, between now and then he asked to have the funds reviewed, and try to find a reasonable expenditure on an annual basis along with projections. He asked to have a summary of the fund balances and how it would affected utility bills.

Mr. Galstad asked to join the group to be a part of these discussions. Mayor Gander asked to have this brought back to the next work session for further discussion. He commented how there is a tight timeline if this project is supposed to be completed in 2021, the costs need to be known, and the petition process needed to be completed. Mr. Galstad suggested a meeting to go through what has been suggested and determine what can be done. Council President Olstad asked if there was doing to be a difference between residential and commercial properties. Mayor Gander said it would be a part of the conversation.

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

#### **4. Campbell Library Update – Charlotte Helgeson**

Ms. Helgeson stated she had provided a list of interesting topics about the library at the last work session and she would be updating the Council about what is going on. She told the Council the library board would be meeting the next day at 8am and she would be sharing the feedback from this meeting with the board. She explained they have went through the different phases of bringing people back into the library, it has been a steady process, and they have not had to step back in any of these phases. She informed the Council they have been able to keep the same schedule for September and October, which included being open two days with three days of front door pickups, and appointments. She reviewed how they have had 117 front door pickups and appointments, the large meeting room has been reserved 19 times, the front desk work is being done by everyone, and the circulation for 2020 was about two thirds of the previous year due to the closure of the library. Ms. Helgeson said they have increased the number of patrons of the library by 7% and 14% of them are non-residents.

Ms. Helgeson told the Council they have been working on some programming, they are trying to determine how much time it takes, and she and the program coordinator have been sharing many of the responsibilities of the public service librarian. She explained they have been offering programs online and slowly bringing people back into the library in small groups, and the patrons seem excited. She said they are prepared to have people back into the building, they have talked with the Public Health office to make sure they are doing what was necessary to make sure it was a safe environment, and there were three full time staff and they are currently looking for more library aides. She added they are in Phase 3 and to be able do to more they need to be fully staffed. She stated there were many great things going on at the library and there are things they would like to plan to do. She reviewed the Tinker Town program, how they would like to be able to send out the parts, and have participants follow online instruction, but currently there was not enough time to put this together. She added they need help with other programs such as dial-a-story, they were not able to work with classes, and they were doing everything they were able to do but to move forward they need to fill the public service librarian position. She added they were not able to ask the part time people to fill in for that position because of what was required and because they were needed elsewhere in the library.

Council member Vetter asked if there was any equipment or supplies that were needed to move into Phase 4 that could be purchased with CARES funding. Ms. Helgeson said they have purchased items with CARES funding for a variety of places in the library. Mayor Gander stated the library has stayed active this whole time, he has been kept up-to-date with what has been going on, and he was very proud of the work they have done for their patrons. He congratulated the staff and board and thanked them for all they had been doing. Council member Helms said the library is a vital part of the community because it is one place people can go. He stated this was one reason why there is a big strain on employees and something needs to be done so they are able to continue to provide service. He added the Council needed to step up and support the library.

#### **5. Request to Install Radiant Heat at Blue Line Arena – Reid Huttunen**

Mr. Huttunen stated based on public input collected when asking about the arenas, one item that was requested was the addition of a heat source in the Blue Line Arena. He said this has been reviewed by JLG and Midwest Refrigeration. He explained how radiant heat could be put on a timer and could be turned on when needed. He said quotes were received and the Blue Line Club would be helping with the

cost of this project and the lowest quote was from Johnson Controls for a total of \$28,200. He added they would be donating some of their time knowing the Blue Line Club would be paying for this project. He asked for approval for this so it can be installed this winter. Mayor Gander commented he had talked with Mr. Huttunen about utilities and there would be an addition of \$150 to \$250 per month in utilities.

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

#### **6. Request for Lift Station Pump Repairs – Jason Stordahl**

Mr. Stordahl explained repairs were needed at a few different lift stations, the lowest quote was from Minnesota Pump Works, the funds were available to pay for these repairs, and he was asking for approval for these repairs. Council member DeMers asked about the impellers and how old the pumps were. Mr. Stordahl said lift 1 and the interconnect filter everything through them so there was wear and tear and lift five was not that old but there was a lot of debris that went through this lift. He said some of this has to deal with the flow and some has to do with the issues they had with the equalization basin. He said there was a lot of wear and tear on the impellers and they would be replaced with hardened impellers which were actually cheaper so where they were able they would be replacing with hardened impellers.

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

#### **ADJOURN:**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON, TO ADJOURN THE OCTOBER 27, 2020 WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 6:08 P.M.**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

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David Murphy, City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer