

Fertile City Council Minutes

April 13, 2020

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, April 13, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present by telephone were: Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Linda Widrig, and Stanton Wang. Also present by telephone were Fair Meadow Nursing Home Administrator Angie Leiting, and City Engineer Alex Ranz. Present in Council Chambers were Council member Todd Wise, City Administrator Lisa Liden, and Public Works Director Kevin Nephew.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wilkens at 6:30 p.m.

There were two additions made to the agenda with those being an amendment to the MnDOT agreement for the design of a runway turnaround and banners for the senior graduating class. The agenda as amended was approved on a motion by Council member Widrig that was seconded by Council member Wang and carried by a unanimous roll call vote.

There were no public comments.

The next item up on the agenda was the approval of the minutes of the regular March meeting and three special meetings that were held in March. Mayor Wilkens noted that there was a typo in the second to last sentence of paragraph seven. The corrected minutes of the regular meeting and the three special meetings were approved on a motion by Council member Wang that was seconded by Council member Widrig. The motion was carried by a unanimous roll call vote.

City Administrator Lisa Liden next gave a brief overview of the financial statements and the out of the ordinary bills paid in March. Liden made note of the \$17,580 reimbursement from MnDOT for airport projects as well as checks made out for fire department expenses, checks to Short Elliott Hendrickson for airport projects and the check to the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust for property and liability insurance. The Treasurer's Report and Bills was approved on a motion by Council member Wang and seconded by Council member Widrig. The motion was carried by a unanimous roll call vote.

Alex Ranz began the Engineers Report by reporting that the survey was completed the week prior for the RV campground. He had been working with Minnesota Public Facilities on the loan for the additions to the water project and the design would need to be finalized and then sent on to Sellin for the project costs to be determined. Ranz noted that there may be some additional mobilization costs for the water and sewer work on Blaine Street. Once the final costs were determined the loan paperwork could be drawn up. As for the timeline on the project, Ranz explained that Sellin would start working on a project in Ulen the following week and then they would come to Fertile in mid to late May.

This was followed by a discussion on the clean up of the old rink area including getting the old rink building removed, the water salesman building and concrete base removed, and the removal of the light poles and rink boards.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave her report to Council. She reported that the month of March began with 41 residents and ended with 39, operating at 94.47% capacity for the month. They had also served 207 home delivered meals. The profit and loss for the month of March showed a profit of just over \$8,000 with the nursing home reporting an income of almost \$17,000 and the assisted living a loss of over \$8,000. The year to date profit and loss showed a loss of just under \$7,000 with the nursing home showing a profit of over \$63,400 and the assisted living showing a loss of over \$70,000. The budget to actual report was also briefly reviewed with Leiting noting that they were at the halfway mark of the fiscal year and ideally all income and expenses would be around 50%. Revenues were at 48% and nursing home expenses were at 51%, and assisted living expenses were at 55%.

Leiting then gave an update on the COVID-19 situation. On April 2nd, the state had done another survey with two inspectors arriving on-site and another present by phone. The nursing home was given a very good report on their

preparedness for COVID-19. Leiting reported also that they had not been awarded the grant that they had applied for since the primary focus at this point was on hospitals. No other COVID funding had been received yet and that no nursing homes had received funding for the added COVID expenses.

Leiting noted that she could apply for expedited payment from the Department of Human Services and that the reimbursement would reflect their current higher costs rather than waiting for two years for those higher costs to be reflected in the rates. Discussion was then held on how long the nursing home could afford to pay the incentives they were currently paying to staff for working during the pandemic. Council member Wise asked about the payments that the home was currently making to the City for past loans in addition to the monthly payments for the assisted living and renovation bonds. Leiting said that she could continue to make the bond payments to the City but that stopping the other debt payments would help with meeting the increased expenses.

After a discussion of the matter, Council member Wise made a motion to temporarily suspend the nursing home payments for the ECPN and EDA debts for April and May. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

Council member Widrig asked if there would be any other payments or grants coming for the added COVID expenses. Leiting stated that she was not too hopeful at this point. Mayor Wilkens then asked about when to end the shift incentives that were currently being paid to staff. Leiting said she would continue to assess that on an ongoing basis and would likely end the incentives once the stay at home order ends.

Public Works Director Kevin Nephew then gave his report to Council. He reported that Electric Pump had been in town to check out the main lift station since it was having issues with blowby. It was determined that the pump brackets need to be replaced. Electric Pump also replaced an air release valve on the force main. The valve was new two years ago but was not covered under warranty. Further discussion was then held on the clean up of the old rink area in preparation for Sellin coming to town for the RV campground project. Nephew reported that Otter Tail would be taking down the light poles and pulling the wires as soon as things dried up from the snow melt. Nephew reported that Public Works would take care of removing the rink boards and the water salesman building before Sellin begins their work on the campground.

City Administrator Lisa Liden then gave a verbal report in the absence of a written report. Liden reported that she was working on the 2019 audit and that it would have to be done remotely this year due to the COVID situation. She reported also that she had an increased workload since she was alone in the office now and had to process the water bill payments. She was working on getting things set up so that Terry Baumgartner could work from home.

Under the Learning Center Mayor Wilkens reported that Brent Silvis had been hired as the new Education Director. With all the schools being closed, there were no education programs being offered so Silvis had been busy cleaning and organizing at the center.

There was nothing to report for the Fire Department except that there had been no calls and that the department had not held any meetings except for the officers.

Dan Triller's report on the airport was then reviewed. Mayor Wilkens added that Matt Lebens with MnDOT Aeronautics had talked to Dan Triller and that there could be some additional funding available due to COVID stimulus funding. Lebens felt that funding could be available to do the runway extension at the same time the runway is widened and resurfaced. Mayor Wilkens had talked to Tom Rongen about the potential lengthening of the runway and Rongen felt it would increase usage at the airport since larger planes could land. It would also create more interest in building hangars at the airport. Wilkens ended by noting that the City should draft a management plan that would address matters such as leases for hangars. Wilkens would reach out to other area airports to see what they had for management plans.

Administrator Liden then explained the need for the amendment to the Minnesota grant agreement for the runway design. With the runway widening and resurfacing MnDOT would like the City to add a turnaround at the end of

the runway. There would be added design costs for adding the turnaround so the previous agreement would need to be amended for those costs.

After a brief discussion of the benefits of having a turnaround at the end of the runway a motion was made by Council member Wang to approve the amendment to the grant agreement. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

The Personnel Committee had nothing to report.

Under New Business the first item addressed was fire department gaming. Administrator Liden explained that the City needed to approve the fire department having pull tabs in the local liquor establishments every year.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve fire department gaming for all three liquor establishments. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

The next item up for discussion was the item added to the agenda for senior banners on the street poles in town. Administrator Liden explained that a group of the senior parents were organizing to get banners made with one banner for each senior. The parents would like the City's permission to put the banners on the street poles and for the maintenance staff to install them.

Discussion was held on the cost of the banners and how long they would be hung. It was reported that the banners would cost around \$2,200 and that the parents would be looking for community support from organizations and businesses. Mayor Wilkens asked about after-prom funds being used for the banners and Council member Widrig explained that those funds were not available since they were still hoping to have prom at a later date. Council member Wang said that he would check with the fire department to see if the department would be willing to donate towards the cost of the banners.

After a discussion of the banners, a motion was made by Council member Widrig to grant permission for the banners to be put up and for the City to donate \$1,000 towards the banners. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

Under announcements Mayor Wilkens reported that he had received a very nice thank you card in the mail from a City resident. The resident expressed their thanks for everything that the City was doing and for the regular updates in the paper.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m. on a motion by Council member Wise.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator