

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2024 – 5:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for Tuesday, January 9, 2024 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 Tim Riopelle, Council Members Clarence Vetter, Ben Pokrzywinski, Dale Helms, Brian Larson, and Karen Peterson.

Staff Present: Karla Anderson, Finance Director; Jeff Boushee, Fire Chief; Nancy Ellis, City Planner; Steve Emery, City Engineer; Ron Galstad, City Attorney; Paul Gorte, Economic Development Director; Michael Hedlund, Police Chief, Charlotte Helgeson, Library Director; Reid Huttunen, City Administrator; Jeremy King, Parks and Recreation Superintendent; Keith Mykleseth, Water and Light General Manager; Megan Nelson, City Clerk; and Jason Stordahl, Public Works Director.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:

The Council President Determined a Quorum was present.

1. SRF Consulting Bridge Study Update – Reid Huttunen & Ken Holte

Mr. Huttunen stated there were two parts to the presentation that included an update on the current study and information about a grant opportunity. He turned it over to Mr. Ken Holte from SRF Consulting. Mr. Holte reminded the Council how there were 5 different phases to the process and listed each step, the study was wrapping up Phase 2, and how that set things up for the NEPA process which was the process where decisions would be made. He stated how that process reviewed many options and got it down to the preferred solution. He reviewed the key components, how the PEL study would start the work to help determine the purpose and need and help streamline the work. He said the study had eight tasks, six had been completed, and they were starting on the seventh. He explained how they had reviewed all the study information from before to show what had happened which could lead to good options.

Mr. Holte said they had a number of conversations with the Department of Transportations from both states and federal agencies, so they had learned a lot of good information. He reviewed how Minnesota used the PEL process, North Dakota did not, but they were willing for both sides to follow that process. He said the entities at this time see this as a local project, local entities would need to take the lead, and the Federal Highway Administration would be looking at the entire corridor instead of just one or two crossings. He reminded everyone that there could not be a pre-determined location because it was a data driven process. He stated the PEL process had four concurrent points, they would need to have the scope of worked approved, and that process had started. He said the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources was also looking at being involved because the did not want to permit landscaping in floodways, there was a change in interpretation, and that could cause some issues and increase the length of the bridge, but

it was not a deal breaker. He explained how the Army Corps of Engineers would be a cooperating agency, the Coast Guard was not sure who would take the lead from their agency, but they were interested in the PEL study.

Mr. Holte said the last task was to find funding sources, the RAISE grant could help fund planning efforts, and they were working on the scope for the PEL study and were waiting on feedback from the Federal Highway Administration. He stated they would be able to develop a budget once they received feedback so the next step would be completed the PEL study which was eligible to be paid for by the RAISE funding. He reminded the Council the application for the RAISE funding was due in February, there was not a matching fund requirement, the grant would be awarded in June, but it would take 12 months up to 18 months to get all of the agreements signed, and it was a reimbursable program so the funds would have to be spent first. He explained the PEL process could take 20 up to 24 months and would find the best solution for the river corridor and asked for questions.

Council President Olstad asked if these funds could be used on everything and commented how it would be short-sighted not to apply for the grant funding. Mr. Holte said there was no pre-determined solution so they could go big and request funds to cover planning for both bridges. Council President Olstad said again it would be short-sighted to not take advantage of this opportunity. Mr. Holte said it showed interest since the group had started a scoping phase and paid for that and how letters of support would really help in the process. Mr. Galstad asked if the grant funds could be used retroactively. Mr. Holte said they could not. Discussion followed about how this would be data driven, there were no pre-determined locations being used, and if the PEL study should continue or if they should try to use grant dollars to pay for it which would take longer to completed. Council member Pokrzywinski said it could take 12 to 18 months to have agreements signed but it would be awarded in June to they could pause the process. More discussion followed about how the cost of the PEL Study would be significant cost and if they should include that in grant funding request. Mr. Holte said he would have more information by the end of the month.

2. Request for Gate on Road at Asphalt Plant Site – Nancy Ellis

Ms. Ellis told the Council a request was coming from the Zavorals to gate off the road to their property since currently no one else needed access. Mr. John Zavoral explained to the Council they would like to add a gate about 150 feet off of County Road 17, people had been driving out there, and they wanted to restrict the access. He added the gate would be removed once the area was more developed. Discussion followed about how there was not currently a concern about emergency access, there was a ditch on both sides but there was an area they could turn around, it was public right-of-way, and eventually it would be paved. Ms. Ellis stated the road was not being maintained at this time, a study was being conducted by MNDOT about the Highway 2 access, and Mr. Galstad had suggested putting something in place until the area was further developed.

This item will be referred to a future meeting.

3. Request to File Plans and Specifications for the 2022 City Project No. 3 Quiet Zone – Steve Emery

Mr. Emery stated he was requesting to file plans and specifications and start advertising for bids for the quiet zone project. He explained the plans were approved by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT), agreements were will being worked on with BNSF, and there had been a lot of discussion

about the timing of when the work would be done because BNSF was not sure when they would be able to get certain items that were needed. He stated he was working on getting the project bid out, getting completed what could be before school started, and some items would have to wait for fall or winter so there was no confirmed timeline of the project. He informed the Council the estimate included costs for flagging by the railroad so they would coordinate as much work being done at the same time the railroad was working because even if a flagger was only used for a couple hours the City would be charged for a whole day. Mr. Emery reminded the Council BNSF had offered \$156,000 as an incentive to close the 3rd Street crossing, MNDOT would be paying for half of the signal replacement, \$200,000 would be coming from the State Aid construction fund, and they would need to determine how the remaining \$450,000 would be covered. He added the bid date was set for February 7th and asked for questions. There were none.

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

4. Requested Change Youth Snowmobile Race Event – Reid Huttunen

Mr. Huttunen explained staff had reached out to the organizers of the youth snowmobile event, they were not able to hold the event due to lack of snow, they still wanted to hold the event, and if possible host it for a couple weekends once a track was built. He asked if the Council would support it and how the dates would still need to be determined. Council President Olstad said this was a good event and it brought visitors to town. Council member Larson stated he was able to attend one of the race days and he was impressed with how the event was run so he would strongly encourage that this event be held.

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 LARSON, TO ADJOURN THE JANUARY 9, 2024 WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 5:47 P.M.

Voting Aye: Pokrzywinski, Riopelle, Helms, Olstad, Larson, Peterson, and Vetter.

Voting Nay: None.

Megan Nelson, City Clerk