

**APPROVED MINUTES  
OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2024 – 5:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

*The Work Session of the East Grand Forks City Council for Tuesday, February 27, 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: Council President Mark Olstad, Council Vice-President Tim Riopelle, Council Members Clarence Vetter, Ben Pokrzywinski, Dale Helms (via Interactive Technology), 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; Megan Nelson, City Clerk; and Jason Stordahl, Public Works Director.*

**DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:**

*The Council President Determined a Quorum was present.*

**1. Review of Bid Results and Funding for the 2022 City Project No. 3 Quiet Zone/Street and Sidewalk Improvements – Steve Emery**

Mr. Emery stated the bids for the project had been opened on February 7<sup>th</sup>, the lowest bidder was Zavorals, and was 29% above the engineer estimate. He explained they were still looking for funding from both BNSF and Sacred Heart, there had been a recent meeting with BNSF, the City was told there would be no additional funding for the closure of the one crossing, but there would be an additional \$50,000 coming from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) in addition to the \$58,000 for the traffic signals. He told the Council Mr. Huttunen would be meeting with Sacred Heart later in the week to see if they were going to help fund this project. He added a recommendation would be given at the next meeting and that BNSF did agree to cover the flaggers so that would remove \$35,000 from the project estimate.

Council member Larson said he thought he heard Zavorals were the lowest bidder, but the bid information showed Opp Construction was the lowest bidder. Mr. Emery said Opp Construction was the lowest bidder. Council member Larson stated this was a good project, it included pedestrian and safety improvements, and would remove the train horn so it should move forward. Mr. Emery informed the Council there were concerns about closure of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street crossing, so parking was being reviewed. Mr. Huttunen stated parking was brought up as a concern and it was asked if the local road that followed the tracks could turn into a one-way so that could be a request brought forward at a future meeting. There were no other questions.

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

## **2. Consider Approving the Joint Powers Agreement with the Department of Natural Resources – Jeremy King**

Mr. King informed the Council the agreement had expired for the operation of the campground, a new four-year agreement has been proposed, there would be a change to the amount of total obligation which would change from \$750,000 to \$1,250,000. He told the Council there were 11,300 reservations in 2023 which was close to the record of reservations and this year would be the 20<sup>th</sup> year the campground was open. He stated the recommendation was to approve the agreement. There were no questions.

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

## **3. Discussion Regarding Deer Population – Administration & Parks Offices**

Ms. Nelson informed the Council over the years staff had received complaints about deer eating plants and trees and causing accidents. She explained she received a call last fall with these complaints, she reached out to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to see if things had changed since the last time this was discussed, during the discussion the 100-yard restriction was brought up, it was not listed in State statutes, only in city code for the shooting of fire arms. She asked the Council if staff should prepare information to consider a special hunt, it would not included was the campground area, some of the items in the management plan were already addressed, and the Council might want to consider amending the City Code for bow and arrow and include changes if an archery range were to be added.

Mr. King told the Council the Park and Recreation Department had not received complaints but had received requests to hunt. He added that Public Works usually picked up four to eight deer that had been hit by cars each year. Discussion followed about how the Chief of Police had never been asked to approve a special event for archery, the Police Department had 13 deer related calls in 2023, and five of those calls were crashes. Council member Peterson asked if there had been any calls from residents that did not feel safe on the greenway system because of the deer. Ms. Nelson said she had not taken any of those calls, there had been a call about coyotes recently. Council President Olstad said they would be willing to look into this further. Council member Larson asked how the archery range would relate to this topic. Ms. Nelson said adding an archery range had been brought up, if they would be amending the ordinance, staff was trying to plan ahead so it did not need to be done again. Council member Larson said it was a good idea to look at both. Council Vice-President Riopelle said the Park and Recreation Commission was looking into that, they were preparing the information, and had sponsors to help with the costs.

This item will be brought forward at a future meeting.

## **4. Discussion Setting Legislative Priorities for the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities Legislative Day – Reid Huttunen**

Mr. Huttunen reminded the Council the Coalition Legislative Day was coming up on March 20<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Gander, Council President Olstad, and himself would be attending, and they needed to start setting up meetings. He said he listed some items, it would be best to limit it to three or four items, and asked for feedback so they are able to prepare a handout. Council member Olstad said the School Resource Officer is a main topic, local government aid (LGA) was another, and they could have a handout but mention a couple others. Council member Larson said many would have general support but would focus on LGA, bonding, and infrastructure for the Industrial Park which were three strong local issues. Council member Pokrzywinski said it was a non-budget year and asked if LGA would be a factor. Mr. Huttunen said the

tax committees were meeting, it might not be a top item this year, it was not a bad thing to mention, and it was a bonding year.

### **5. Discussion on City Council & Mayor Pay Rates – Tim Riopelle**

Council Vice-President Riopelle said this was brought to his attention when negotiating with the labor unions, staff looked back and there had not been a change since at least 2008, and it could be later than that. Council member Vetter said Mr. Dick Grassel was the last one to bring this up. Council Vice-President Riopelle explained he was proposing council members would receive \$800 per month, the council president would receive \$1,000, and the Mayor would receive \$1,200 per month. He said they did not receive any benefits like other cities gave council members. He added they handle cost of living adjustments, salary and wages to conform with others, and suggested this was reviewed every five years. He said the number of meetings they attended in addition to council meetings with the boards and commissions they were on, as well as the amount of information they dealt with, so it was appropriate to make a change. Council member Vetter said always bothered him when the State and Federal legislators vote on their own raises and suggested having the citizens vote on the raise so it could be added on the ballot. Council Vice-President Riopelle said it was listed in the charter. Council President Olstad asked if they should make a change to the charter. Council member Vetter deferred the question to the city attorney. Council member Larson commented it was an awkward thing to vote on and suggested putting this in place following the next election which might motivate people to run for office. He said he would feel better about setting this up for the next council. Discussion followed about looking into this further to determine when the last salary increase was.

This item will be brought forward at a future meeting.

### **ADJOURN:**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, TO ADJOURN THE FEBRUARY 27, 2024 WORK SESSION OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 5:27 P.M.**

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

*Voting Nay: None.*

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Megan Nelson, City Clerk