

**APPROVED MINUTES
OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2024 – 6:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Council Meeting of the East Grand Forks City Council for Tuesday, December 3, 2024 was called to order by Council President Olstad at 6:00 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 (via Interactive Technology), 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; Maggie Brockling, Economic Development Director; Nancy Ellis, City Planner; Ron Galstad, City Attorney; 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.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

OPEN FORUM:

Council President Olstad stated the open form was an opportunity for members of the public to address the City Council on items not on the current agenda and items requiring Council action maybe deferred to staff or Boards and Commissions for research and future Council Agendas if appropriate. He asked if anyone would like to address the City Council, please come up to the podium to do so. No one came forward.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Consider approving the minutes of the “Regular Meeting” for the East Grand Forks, Minnesota City Council of November 19, 2024.
2. Consider approving the minutes of the “Special Meeting” for the East Grand Forks, Minnesota City Council of November 19, 2024.
3. Consider approving the minutes of the “Work Session” for the East Grand Forks, Minnesota City Council of November 26, 2024.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, TO APPROVE ITEMS ONE (1) THROUGH THREE (3).

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

Voting Nay: None.

SCHEDULED BID LETTINGS: NONE.

SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS:

4. Truth and Taxation Hearing on preliminary tax levy of 7% with proposed reduction down to a 3% final levy.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER HELMS, TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING.

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

Voting Nay: None.

Ms. Anderson reminded everyone this hearing was required each year, they would review the proposed levy, and historical information. She stated the proposed 3% levy increase would increase the property taxes collected by \$207,903, the amount of fines received was reduced from previous years, and some of the areas where expenses were increased. She added the amount of expenditures over revenues was \$552,163 which would come from the fund reserves to balance the budget. She continued with the pie chart showing the breakdown of where revenues came from with the largest amount coming from property taxes, how revenues were increasing by \$383,687, she reviewed the breakdown of expenses, how the largest increase was in personnel, and where there were other increases based on the numbers from the previous year.

Ms. Anderson explained property values were determined by the county assessor and based on property sales, special assessments were also added to the property tax statement but were not property taxes, and the property tax statement included all the taxing entities including the special tax districts such as the ambulance and watershed district. She stated there were five properties, four homes, and one commercial property, that they have used for several years to see how the proposed levy would affect property owners. She said that both the 7% preliminary levy and 3% proposed levy information was included, one of the homes had dropped in value, and reviewed how each were affected the proposed levies. She then reviewed what a truth and taxation statement looked like, how it listed the proposed taxes for the following year, and on the back of the form it listed the preliminary levy numbers for the Polk County communities. She added the average proposed levy increase for cities was at 8% and for counties it was at 6.4% with Polk County having a 4% preliminary levy. She added they were hoping to set the final levy at this meeting for the city and set the budget at the following council meeting. There were no questions.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER HELMS, TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

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

Voting Nay: None.

5. Public Hearing to consider granting a property tax abatements for the properties that qualify under the New Construction Housing program.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING.

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

Voting Nay: None.

Ms. Brockling stated there were 14 homes that qualified, 10 homes were in the second year of the program, and there were four homes in the first year of the program. She added it took about two years for homes to reach full assessed value once built. There were no questions.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

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

Voting Nay: None.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Items under the “Consent Agenda” will be adopted with one motion; however, council members may request individual items to be pulled from the consent agenda for discussion and action if they choose.

6. Consider approving the Exempt Gambling Permit application for the Whitetails Unlimited Red River Valley Deer Camp group to hold a raffle on January 25, 2025 at the American Legion located at 1009 Central Ave NW East Grand Forks, MN 56721 and waive the 30-day waiting period.
7. Consider approving the Special Event Application for the Frozen Feat 5K/10K Run on February 15, 2025 from 8am to 11am utilizing the greenway trails for the event.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER PETERSON, TO APPROVE ITEMS SIX (6) AND SEVEN (7).

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

Voting Nay: None.

ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF REPORTS OF OFFICERS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:

8. Regular meeting minutes of the Water, Light, Power, and Building Commission for November 6, 2024.

COMMUNICATIONS: NONE

OLD BUSINESS:

9. Consider adopting Ordinance 43 4th Series amending City Code Title 11 by adding Chapter 120 an ordinance to regulate cannabis and lower-potency hemp edible businesses and authorizing Chapter 152 Zoning Districts to the Land Usage Title 15 to operate the businesses within the City of East Grand Forks and by adopting by reference City Code Chapter 10 and Section 10.99 which, among other things, contain penalty provisions (2nd Reading).

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, TO ADOPT ORDINANCE 43 4TH SERIES AMENDING CITY CODE TITLE 11 BY ADDING CHAPTER 120 AN ORDINANCE TO REGULATE CANNABIS AND LOWER-POTENCY HEMP EDIBLE BUSINESSES AND AUTHORIZING CHAPTER 152 ZONING DISTRICTS TO THE LAND USAGE TITLE 15 TO OPERATE THE BUSINESSES WITHIN THE CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS AND BY ADOPTING BY REFERENCE CITY CODE CHAPTER 10 AND SECTION 10.99 WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, CONTAIN PENALTY PROVISIONS (2ND READING).

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

Voting Nay: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

10. Consider approving the summary for Ordinance 43 4th Series to be published in place of the complete ordinance.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, TO APPROVE THE SUMMARY FOR ORDINANCE 43 4TH SERIES TO BE PUBLISHED IN PLACE OF THE COMPLETE ORDINANCE.

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

Voting Nay: None.

11. Consider adopting Resolution No. 24-12-91 approving a 3% increase to the 2024 tax levy, collectable in 2025.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER PETERSON, TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 24-12-91 APPROVING A 3% INCREASE TO THE 2024 TAX LEVY, COLLECTABLE IN 2025.

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

Voting Nay: None.

12. Consider adopting Resolution No. 24-12-86 authorizing a tax abatement on the listed properties that qualified under the New Home Construction Program for 2024 that is payable in 2025.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER HELMS, TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 24-12-86 AUTHORIZING A TAX ABATEMENT ON THE LISTED PROPERTIES THAT QUALIFIED UNDER THE NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM FOR 2024 THAT IS PAYABLE IN 2025.

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

Voting Nay: None.

13. Consider approving the Site Use Agreement between the City of East Grand Forks and Nutrition Services Inc for the use of the Senior Center for the nutrition program for 2025.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER POKRZYWINSKI, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER PETERSON, TO APPROVE THE SITE USE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS AND NUTRITION SERVICES INC FOR THE USE OF THE SENIOR CENTER FOR THE NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR 2025.

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

Voting Nay: None.

14. Consider adopting Resolution No. 24-12-87 approving the hiring of Herman Gray as a Police Officer at a salary of \$33.66 per hour.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER HELMS, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER VETTER, TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 24-12-87 APPROVING THE HIRING OF HERMAN GRAY AS A POLICE OFFICER AT A SALARY OF \$33.66 PER HOUR.

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

Voting Nay: None.

15. Consider approving the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of East Grand Forks and the AFSCME Council 65 approving the employer health insurance contributions for 2025.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, TO APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS AND THE AFSCME COUNCIL 65 APPROVING THE EMPLOYER HEALTH INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2025.

Council member Vetter said before the City used to give a certain percentage towards the premium amount and a set dollar amount for each employee so only giving a percentage was going backwards. He stated he would be voting no on the health insurance contributions because someone with children should not be able to receive more benefit than someone that did not have children, and everyone should receive the same benefit.

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

Voting Nay: Vetter.

16. Consider approving the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of East Grand Forks and the International Association of Fire Fighters Local No. 3423 approving the employer health insurance contributions for 2025.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, TO APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS AND THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS LOCAL NO. 3423 APPROVING THE EMPLOYER HEALTH INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2025.

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

Voting Nay: Vetter.

17. Consider approving the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of East Grand Forks and the Law Enforcement Labor Services Local No. 152 approving the employer health insurance contributions for 2025.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, TO APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CITY OF EAST GRAND FORKS AND THE LAW ENFORCEMENT LABOR SERVICES LOCAL NO. 152 APPROVING THE EMPLOYER HEALTH INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2025.

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

Voting Nay: Vetter.

18. Consider adopting Resolution No. 24-12-88 approving the employer health insurance contributions for 2025 for non-union employees.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 24-12-88 APPROVING THE EMPLOYER HEALTH INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2025 FOR NON-UNION EMPLOYEES.

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

Voting Nay: Vetter.

19. Consider adopting Resolution No. 24-12-89 adopting the Gravie ICHRA plan as the City's sponsored group health plan for the purposes defined by Minnesota Statute 299A.465.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER RIOPELLE, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER LARSON, TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 24-12-89 ADOPTING THE GRAVIE ICHRA PLAN AS THE CITY'S SPONSORED GROUP HEALTH PLAN FOR THE PURPOSES DEFINED BY MINNESOTA STATUTE 299A.465.

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

Voting Nay: None.

20. Consider adopting Resolution No. 24-12-90 formally requesting \$126,000 in project funds from the MPCA Enforcement Action grant for the for Griggs Park playground equipment, community tree planting, the library art/sensory garden, and LaFave Park ADA improvements.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER HELMS, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER POKRZYWINSKI, TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 24-12-90 FORMALLY REQUESTING \$126,000 IN PROJECT FUNDS FROM THE MPCA ENFORCEMENT ACTION GRANT FOR THE FOR GRIGGS PARK PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT, COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING, THE LIBRARY ART/SENSORY GARDEN, AND LAFAVE PARK ADA IMPROVEMENTS.

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

Voting Nay: None.

CLAIMS:

21. Consider authorizing the City Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer to issue payment of recommended bills and payroll.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER HELMS, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER POKRZYWINSKI, TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK-TREASURER TO ISSUE PAYMENT OF RECOMMENDED BILLS AND PAYROLL.

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

Voting Nay: None.

COUNCIL/STAFF REPORTS:

Mayor Gander thanked Mr. Thompson for the link so he could participate by Zoom. He stated there was a lot of work to get the levy down to a 3% increase, there were many moving parts, and thanked everyone for their work on getting the levy down.

Council Member Helms said winter was here and reminded everyone to watch out for ice.

Mr. Huttunen said there was only one union group left to settle with regarding the health insurance contributions and he was hoping to have everything wrapped up by the next meeting. He also thanked everyone that worked on the cannabis ordinance to get things to this point.

ADJOURN:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER HELMS, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER POKRZYWINSKI, TO ADJOURN THE DECEMBER 3, 2024 COUNCIL MEETING OF THE EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA CITY COUNCIL AT 6:33 P.M.

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

Voting Nay: None.

Megan Nelson, City Clerk