

City Council Meeting
February 1, 2021

The Fergus Falls City Council held a regular meeting on Monday February 1, 2021 at 5:30 pm in the City Council Chambers. Pastor Doug Dent of Federated Church gave the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Mayor Schierer called the meeting to order at 5:33 pm. Council members in attendance were Gustafson, Hicks, Fish, Hagberg, Kvamme, Rufer, and Thompson. Arneson was absent.

Approval of the Agenda

A motion and second were made by Gustafson and Hagberg approving tonight's agenda with the addition of an update from Greater Fergus Falls (Board and Committee Reports) and the motion carried.

Giving Hearts Day Proclamation

Mayor Schierer read a proclamation declaring February 11, 2021 as Giving Hearts Day. A video highlighting local organizations involved in these fundraising efforts was shared.

Bicycle Friendly Award

Wayne Hurley, representing Pedal Fergus Falls shared the City of Fergus Falls recently received a Bicycle Friendly Award. Fergus Falls is now in the nation's top ten list of bicycle friendly businesses from the League of American Bicyclists.

Consent Agenda

The following items were approved under **Resolution #18-2021** by Fish: Motion approving the open and closed minutes for January 19, 2021 council meetings. A motion approving a Metal Recycling license for Lakes Iron & Metal, Inc. and a Mechanical license for Jerry's Heating & A/C. **Resolution #19-2021** authorizing the Library Director to submit a National Endowment for the Arts Big Reads grant request. A motion directing the City Attorney to draft an ordinance amending allowed light industrial uses in B-5 and B-6 zones. The resolution was seconded by Thompson and was adopted.

Ordinance 10

Ordinance 10, Eighth Series, Amending allowed uses in B-5 and B-6 Shopping Center Business Districts was introduced by Hicks and was declared to have its first reading.

Fire Relief Service Benefits

Luke Draxten, representing the Fire Relief Association, asked the council to approve an increase in service benefits for retiring paid on call firefighters from \$5,150 to \$5,500 per year of active service. After analyzing the request, reviewing the funding ratio parameters and rate of their investment return, the Fire Relief Association recommended the increase. Kvamme offered **Resolution #20-2021** approving an increase in service benefits for retiring paid on call fighters, which was seconded by Hagberg and was adopted.

Lobbyist Services

The Legislative Committee recommended retaining the lobbyist services of Joel Carlson for the 2021-2022 state legislative biennium. Mr. Carlson has worked as the city's lobbyist for the past 18 years and his efforts have been fruitful in providing state funding for local projects. Mr. Carlson has offered

to lower the rate of his contracted services for the work he will provide in 2021 due to the economic uncertainty of the state's budget situation. His contract for 2021 would be \$21,500 and the 2022 rate is \$43,000. Mr. Carlson will focus his efforts on the proposed sales tax items and losses related to the coal plant closure slated for later this year. Rufer and Fish commented on their support to retain Mr. Carlson's services and Hicks stated he is opposed to the principal of hiring lobbyists. Rufer offered **Resolution #21-2021** approving the hiring of Joel Carlson as the 2021 and 2022 lobbyist for the City of Fergus Falls, which was seconded by Fish and the resolution was adopted with Hicks voting in opposition.

Airport Manager/Fixed Based Operator

The city has been working through the process of hiring an Airport Manager/Fixed Based Operator (FBO) after the recent retirement of the previous manager. On January 25, the Airport Advisory Board made a recommendation on the new manager, but they have indicated their desire to have more time to discuss the issue. Mayor Schierer suggested giving them an additional two weeks of time to deliberate and bring forth a recommendation at the February 16 council meeting. A motion and second were made by Rufer and Hicks to hold off on making a hiring decision for two weeks to allow the Airport Advisory Board the time they requested to provide additional input and the motion carried.

John Decoster of Landrum Brown is the consultant hired by the city to oversee the Airport Manager/FBO process. Mr. Decoster provided a summary and timeline of the process the city used to solicit these airport services. Requests for Proposals (RFP) were sought to identify candidates that possessed the specifications sought by the Airport Advisory Board. The RFP was reviewed by the board and the position was publicly advertised from late November until December 30, 2020. Four proposals were submitted and Landrum Brown used their professional expertise and knowledge of the airport industry to score and rank the candidate proposals. A matrix of the criteria, scores and candidate proposals was provided to the board members. On January 25, the Airport Advisory Board unanimously voted to recommend Alexandria Aviation (dba Otter Aviation), but have now requested more time to consider their recommendation. This recommendation will be considered by the council at their February 16, 2021 council meeting.

Greater Fergus Falls Services Contract

Late last year Steve Rufer, in his capacity as the Greater Fergus Falls President, sent a letter to the city requesting the Economic Development Services Agreement with the city be amended. They requested the city continue providing them with the state statutory maximum amount of funding (\$50,000 per year) and discontinue the current agreement. If their professional services are needed, they could be provided for additional compensation. Mayor Schierer did not feel it is unusual to not have an agreement and he would be willing to discuss a partnership based from a professional services agreement. Council Member Tom Rufer nominated Krista Hagberg and Karoline Gustafson to meet with a few members of the Greater Fergus Falls board and start this discussion. He then advocated for the city continuing to work with Greater Fergus Falls as they have produced results. Hicks stated his preference for having a contract in place so the scope of work, obligations and roles are clearly defined. He was concerned the city would get charged for work that used to be provided under the contract and suggested the organization contact Otter Tail County for funding since they expanded their territory to a 10 mile radius outside of the city limits. T. Rufer felt there is great value in the services provided and the \$50,000 contribution to Greater Fergus would be less expensive than the city hiring an economic development staff member. There was a consensus with the council to have

Council Members Hagberg and Gustafson meet with representatives from Greater Fergus Falls and bring a recommendation back to the city.

Resolution of Accounts

Fish offered a resolution authorizing the payments and claims in the amount of \$1,057,843.74, which was seconded by Hagberg and was adopted.

Reports

The Mayor reported the Greater Fergus Falls annual report is complete and will be presented at the February 24 Committee of the Whole meeting. A new massage therapist has started a business downtown and was welcomed to the community.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm.

Lynne Olson

Open Forum

Kevin Petron, 708 S Oak Street Apt 2

Mr. Petron spoke to the council at the open forum about his concerns with snowplowing and parking. He felt people are confused when the plows will be out and when to move their vehicles. The longer vehicles stay in place, the more snow that piles in the streets creating dangerous conditions on narrow streets. He also expressed concerns for the pedestrians who have to go into the street because of those who don't shovel their sidewalks. He advocated for the city to implement an odd/even parking system and to ticket and tow vehicles not in compliance.

Mayor Schierer felt it would be appropriate for staff to recap the city's snow removal system. Hicks suggested including reminders such as garbage cans being picked up within 24 hours, proper clearance between garbage and recycling containers and timely cleaning of sidewalks should be included in this review.