

Committee of the Whole
August 11, 2021

The Fergus Falls City Council met as a Committee of the Whole on August 11, 2021 at 7:00 am in the City Council Chambers. Mayor Schierer called the meeting to order and the following council members were in attendance: Kvamme, Rufer, Thompson, Arneson, Gustafson, Hicks and Fish. Hagberg was absent.

Opticom Traffic Signal Project

Chief Kile Bergren asked for the council's blessing to install Opticom emergency vehicle preemption systems in all traffic lights within the city. The system reduces the risk to both the public and emergency vehicles as it detects approaching emergency vehicles and turns the lights green while preventing all other traffic from proceeding through intersections at that time. The cost of the installation is \$90,000 would be covered by state aid funds. A second phase of the project is to outfit each public safety vehicle with infrared emitters at an estimated cost of \$500-\$1,000 per vehicle. This cost would be absorbed by the department's equipment fund or forfeiture budget. All emergency vehicles have the ability to use the traffic signal detection devices and it will be able to detect multiple emergency vehicles approaching the same area. This technology is compatible with traffic signals in other communities which will be helpful in mutual aid situations. City snowplows could also be outfitted for the transmitters. There are more advanced options the city could use, but wouldn't be applicable in a community of our size. A motion and second were made by Fish and Arneson to recommend the council approve the installation of Opticom emergency vehicle preemption systems in all traffic lights within the city and the motion carried.

MN DNR Grant for Fire Department

The Fire Department is eligible to receive a MN DNR Fire Assistance Program grant for rural fire protection equipment. Personal protective gear including wildland helmet lights, water supply appliances and nozzles and outfitting Engine 13 with a brush guard and winch would be purchased. The total project cost is \$6,548 and the grant amount is \$3,274. The remaining funds would come from the department's capital fund budget. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Gustafson to recommend the council accept a matching grant award from the MN DNR Fire Department Assistance Program for the Fergus Falls Fire Department and the motion carried.

Coalition of Greater MN Cities Update

Elizabeth Wefel of the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities provided an annual update on the priorities, goals and issues their organization supports for cities around the state. Fergus Falls is one of 110 member cities who has the Coalition advocating for LGA funding, economic development, child care, broadband service, annexation and land use, transportation, environment and energy issues, labor and employment concerns. Wefel shared information about the organization's goals, the legislative session and answered questions about environmental concerns.

Comprehensive Plan

City staff sought council direction on the creation of a comprehensive plan. The studies the city has completed over the years would be incorporated into a comprehensive plan. The plan would determine community goals for community development and would establish the purpose, zoning and activities allowed on each land parcel to provide compatibility and continuity. The plan would be developed using a combination of staff time, consultant work and community member input. Staff

would look into possible planning grant opportunities as a funding source, but the overall plan cost would be incorporated into the city's 2022 budget. Mayor Schierer as well as each council member attending expressed their support for directing staff to determine budgetary needs for a comprehensive plan. They agreed wide reaching extensive community engagement is vital to this plan's development as well as frequent review by the council. There was consensus that having a comprehensive plan would benefit staff, developers and the community as a whole by providing clear guidelines for development. The Planning Commission, Port Authority and Greater Fergus Falls would also be used in the plan's creation and utilization to provide a unified vision for the community. A motion and second were made by Gustafson and Arneson to recommend the council direct staff to determine budgetary needs for a comprehensive plan and to report back to the council with options on the creation of a comprehensive plan and the motion carried.

New Business

Hicks asked staff to upgrade the city's email system to Microsoft Outlook as too many messages are not going through the current system. Andrew Bremseth said the IT staff has been working on obtaining quotes for a new system that would be incorporated into the city's 2022 budget. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Rufer to direct staff to provide quotes and a plan for upgrading the city's email system and the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 am

Lynne Olson