

City Council Minutes
November 15, 2021

The Fergus Falls City Council held a regular meeting on November 15, 2021 at 5:30 pm in the City Council Chambers. Pastor Dave Foss of Bethel Lutheran Church gave the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Mayor Schierer called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm. Council members in attendance were Hagberg, Kvamme, Rufer, Thompson, Arneson, Gustafson and Hicks. Fish was absent.

Approval of Agenda

A motion and second were offered by Gustafson and Thompson to approve tonight's agenda with a revision to H-5 (Campus View Addition project) and Hick's request to remove item six from the consent agenda and the motion carried.

Retirement: Dave Christianson

Hicks offered **Resolution #241-2021** acknowledging the retirement of Dave Christianson and recognizing his 38 years of service to the City of Fergus Falls, which was seconded by Arneson and was adopted.

Retirement: Pat Kava

Gustafson offered **Resolution #242-2021** acknowledging the retirement of Pat Kava and recognizing his 7 years of service to the City of Fergus Falls, which was seconded by Hagberg and was adopted.

Library Foundation Update

Jennifer Smestad announced the Library Foundation made its final payment and fulfilled their \$3 million commitment to the city for the Library Renewal Project. She spoke about the public-private partnership efforts to bring this project to fruition thanked the donors, board members, council, and staff for their contributions to make this such a successful project. She commented on the usage of the library and its value to so many within the community, region and for visitors alike. Smestad felt this process can inspire other efforts within the community to work together and continue building a strong community. The foundation is working through a strategic planning process to continue supporting the library.

Consent Agenda

The following items were approved under **Resolution #243-2021** by Rufer: Motion approving the open and closed minutes from the November 1, 2021 City Council meeting and the November 10, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting. Motion approving the following licenses: Full Liquor (2022) Zens Steak and Seafood, Fiesta Brava; Tobacco (2022) Fleet Farm (store and convenience store), Walmart Inc., Joanne New Age. 3.2% Off Sale Malt Liquor Walmart Inc.; Paving/Sidewalk (2021) Relay Construction LLC; Ellingson Trenchless LLC; Mechanical (2021) Mid States Infloor Heating LLC; Fireworks Display Permit Over the River Festival, December 4 in Wright Park at dusk; Brewer License, Taproom and Growler (2022) Fergus Brewing Company. **Resolution #244-2021** setting the ADA Transition Plan public hearing date for December 6, 2021 and appointing the Senior Engineering Tech and Sidewalk Program Coordinator as the ADA Coordinator for Public Rights of Way. **Resolution #245-2021** certifying delinquent special assessments. **Resolution #246-2021** certifying delinquent miscellaneous invoices. The resolution was seconded by Thompson and was adopted.

Hicks commented on the delinquency of the WestRidge Mall's utility payments. He said they have been making demands of the city and should reciprocate by staying current on their bills . His opinion is the city needs to take a hard stance on turning off their water if they continue not paying their bill. Hicks offered [Resolution #247-2021](#) certifying delinquent utility accounts, which was seconded by Hagberg and was adopted.

Ordinance 20

Ordinance 20, Eighth Series, Amending the zoning map from R-1 to R-A for Timber Ridge Estates was introduced by Gustafson and declared to have its first reading.

Ordinance 19

Ordinance 19, Eighth Series, Vacation of Campus Addition and Outlot B was adopted by a roll call vote.

PI 9508 RTC Phase 3

The council was asked to initiate PI 9508, the RTC Phase 3, the mothball and preservation options. Upon approval, staff would work with Stantec to refine the scope of work and cost estimates prior to begin preparing bid documents. City Engineer Brian Yavarow said the cost estimates for the main tower building as well as the east and west detached buildings would be presented as a base bid plus alternates so the council can decide what the most pressing needs are within the allotted budget. There is \$1,714,895.75 remaining from the Phase II state grant and Hicks asked if the city could return the money to the state rather than spending it. He said the city has shown willingness to preserve the tower, but the vision for the remaining buildings is still unknown. He felt if the city were to give the money back to the state, it would be looked upon favorably when the city would ask for additional funding once a concrete plan has been established. Kvamme disagreed with the comments there is not a plan for the campus stating a master plan has been developed over the past two years. He said the plan states the buildings are excellent candidates for renovation as they are structurally sound and the only thing making them unsafe is the mold issues. He advocated the council use the funding to clean, protect and keep the water out of the structure. Hicks offered [Resolution #248-2021](#) initiating PI 9508, the RTC Phase 3 Preservation Project, which was seconded by Hagberg and was adopted.

Property Tax Rebate Program

Otter Tail County recently extended their property tax rebate program. Applicants can now receive a \$10,000 rebate from the county's portion of property taxes and the program deadline was extended until December 31, 2024. Amy Baldwin from the county explained the reasoning behind the extension. Over the course of the pandemic, many people's plans changed due to economic factors, supply chain issues and rising material costs. Home values have gone up extensively and that will affect assessed home values. The county decided to extend the rebate to \$10,000 and retroactively over this higher level to those who have already applied to the program. Applicants have one year to build their home after being accepted into the program. Extending the program an additional year would provide more time to mitigate some of the factors holding people back from building. 150 applications have been approved to date with the majority coming from township areas. The program is also trying to provide needed to increase the housing inventory and attract workers to our county. Hicks said he would be voting in opposition as there have been numerous properties receiving TIF or tax abatement lately and the city needs to start collecting taxes. Rufer expressed his support for the program provides benefits such as building supply sales and solving housing needs within our communities. Hagberg offered [Resolution #249-2021](#), extending the city's property tax rebate

program through 2024, which was seconded by Rufer and was adopted with Hicks voting in opposition.

Campus View Public Hearing

Arneson offered **Resolution #250-2021** setting a preliminary project hearing for Campus View Addition for December 20, 2021 at 5:30 pm in the City Council Chambers, which was seconded by Hagberg and was adopted.

Resolution of Accounts

Hagberg offered a resolution authorizing the payments and claims in the amount of \$5,092,904.09, which was seconded by Kvamme and was adopted. Finance Director Bill Sonmor explained the larger amounts were due to annual bond payments and the city's reinvestment of funds within the investment portfolio.

Boards and Commissions

Staff have been working on a revitalization of city boards and commissions in an effort to clarify roles, improve communication and increase efficiencies for board and staff members. Some of the proposed changes include absorbing the duties of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee into the Parks and Recreation Board and renaming this the Board of Parks, Trails and Recreation, lowering the number of board members in many cases from 5 members to 3 members and designating the Airport Advisory Board, Human Rights Commission, Public Safety Advisory Board, Public Arts Commission and Sister City Commission as ad hoc commissions who meet based on work needs. The Natural Resources Advisory Commission was proposed to be codified as an official committee under the City Code. Hicks had questions about membership, vacancies and uniformity amongst the language. There was a discussion on the fundraising/grant writing opportunities for boards to participate in and the need for all boards to follow the rules set forth in the Open Meeting Law. The council was in consensus that members do not need to be residents of the city to participate on the boards or commissions. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Gustafson directing the City Attorney to draft revisions to City Code Chapter 32: City Organizations and the motion carried. The proposed changes will be reviewed at an upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 pm.

Lynne Olson