

Committee of the Whole Meeting  
December 1, 2021

The Fergus Falls City Council met as a Committee of the Whole on December 1, 2021 at 7:00 am in the City Council Chambers. Rufer, serving as the Acting Mayor, called the meeting to order. Council members in attendance were Hagberg, Kvamme, Rufer, Thompson, Arneson, Gustafson, Hicks and Fish.

**Visit Fergus Falls Contract**

The purpose of Visit Fergus Falls is promoting Fergus Falls as a tourism destination and strengthening the hospitality sector of the community. The city has a Local Convention and Tourism Agreement with Visit Fergus Falls. It has been a number of years since the contract was reviewed. Their board has proposed and approved an updated agreement that complies with lodging tax state statutes and City Code. This would be a three year contract with an automatic renewal unless a 60 day termination notice is provided. Visit Fergus Falls gets 97% of the lodging tax charged on hotel visits to enhance their tourism endeavors and the city gets the remaining 3% for administering fiscal host services. The city's only obligation in the contract is to serve as the fiscal host and a council member is appointed to serve on their board. Their bylaws require board members to be comprised from the hotel, restaurant, community attractions industries as well as an at large position. A motion and second were made by Fish and Hagberg to recommend the council approve the Local Convention and Tourism Agreement with Visit Fergus Falls and authorize the Mayor and City Administrator to execute the agreement and the motion carried.

**Campus View Estates**

The Preliminary Engineering Feasibility Report for PI 5958, the Campus View Estates Development is complete. The city's proposed work would consist of 36 foot streets with a sidewalk, curb and gutter, sanitary sewer main with services, watermain with services and storm sewer improvements to serve the benefitting properties. The total preliminary project cost is \$1,795,645 and the primary funding source is General Obligation Tax Abatement Bonds. Special assessments would also be levied against the benefitting properties as per city policy and Minnesota Statute Chapter 429 requirements. The collection of Tax Increment Funding would replace the special assessments to fund the bonds. A preliminary project hearing has been scheduled on December 20. The City Engineer reviewed the project scope, area and tentative construction date of spring 2022. He recommended the council accept the report as this project will benefit the necessary development of housing. Council members asked if a sidewalk on Park Street from Fir Avenue to the Minnesota Veterans Home as well as sidewalks on both sides of the streets through the development. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Thompson to recommend the council accept the Preliminary Engineering Feasibility Report for PI 5958 and the motion carried.

**Airport Maintenance and Operations Grant**

In addition to the state and federal grant programs for the airport capital improvement projects, the State of Minnesota is providing funding to supplement annual airport operations through an Airport Maintenance and Operation Grant contract. The state is offering 75% reimbursement in 2022 and 2023 for eligible items not to exceed \$71,453 each fiscal year. Expenses eligible for this reimbursement include city employee wages, heating, electricity, parts, supplies and pavement repairs. The state requires recipients to adhere to operational safety standards to maintain the airport in a safe and serviceable manner for aeronautical purposes only for the use and benefit of the public. A motion and

second were made by Hicks and Gustafson to recommend the council accept the State of Minnesota Airport Maintenance and Operation Grant offer for state fiscal years 2022 and 2023 and the motion carried.

### **NP Park Playground Improvements**

The city has been working with local organizers to create an inclusive playground at NP Park that meets ADA standards. He shared the proposed project footprint and explained the park will be raised three feet to safely transition to the current sidewalk system. He reviewed the necessary modifications to the storm water basins and drainage system. Quotes were solicited for the granular import and placement of the playground equipment. The low quote was received from Barry Construction Inc. (BCI) in the amount of \$33,348.28. Quotes were also taken for the storm sewer improvements. Barry Construction Inc. submitted the low quote for this work in the amount of \$14,569.62. The funding is expected to come from the private fundraising efforts. A motion and second were made by Fish and Kvamme to recommend the council award the quotes for granular import and storm sewer improvements at NP Park and the motion carried.

### **Grant for Rural Child Care**

Community Development Director Klara Beck asked the council for authorization to submit a grant to the Rural Child Care Innovation Program. This is a facilitated community engagement process to address the challenges of child care in rural communities and develop practical solutions for the participating communities. The city will be working in conjunction with Otter Tail County, West Central Initiative, and other entities working on child care issues. Possible outcomes of the project are the startup of new child care services or programs, mentorships, a POD model, community and business partnerships and awareness. Applications to participate in the project are due January 7 and there is no charge to partake in the process. It is estimated the process will take 18-24 months and the end goal is having the creation of a feasible community specific action plan. The community specific goals and action plans developed by the steering committee will be shared with the council as they develop. A motion and second were made by Gustafson and Thompson to recommend the council authorize the city and their partners to submit an application to participate in the First Children's Finance Rural Child Care Innovation Program and the motion carried.

### **Glacial Edge Trail**

In 2017, the city adopted the Glacial Edge Trail Master Plan for a 14 mile trail mostly located within the city limits. Nick Leonard, representing Otter Tail County said the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) designated a trail of regional significance in 2019. A five segment trail running East to West, known as the Pelican to Perham trail has secured funding for four of the five segments. The county is working on legislative bonding to secure the last segment which runs through Maplewood State Park. The next priority would be the establishment of this trail running from Fergus Falls to Maplewood State Park. The GMRPTC has suggested the county and city work together on this project so each trail is deemed regionally significant. An amendment to the Glacial Edge Trail Master Plan would be easier and more cost effective than initiating a new master plan. The amendment would require the county and city enter into a cooperative agreement to states funding, construction and maintenance are the responsibility of the jurisdictions. Trail segments within the city and adjacent townships are the responsibility of the city while the county would be responsible for all other trail segments. The county has already agreed to the amendment. A motion and second were made by Arneson and Hagberg to recommend the council accept the amendment to the Glacial

Edge Trail Master Plan and enter into a cooperative agreement with Otter Tail County for the Glacial Edge Trail and the motion carried.

### **New Business, Lincoln Avenue Street Project**

Next year the city is planning a \$1.2 million project to improve the street condition and ADA compliance on Union Avenue from Fir to Lincoln Avenue and Lincoln from Union to Friberg as a federal and state funded transportation improvement project. There has been interest expressed in adding bike lanes to this project. It is not feasible to add bike lanes on the Union Avenue portion of the project without removing residential parking on one side of the street. Space is also limited in the Lincoln Avenue portion of the project, but the city has been looking at two options for driving and biking lanes. Alternate A would consist of a 10.5 foot driving lanes, 5 foot bike lanes and 10.5 foot turn lanes. Approximately 45 feet of curb and gutter would need to be removed at the intersections to accomplish this plan and no parking would be disrupted. Alternate B would have a shared 14 foot drive/bike lane as well as 10.5 foot turn lanes at the intersections. Both options would transition to a 7.5 foot parking lane, 5 foot bike path and 11 foot driving lanes along the corridor. Bike lanes are not required in the reconfiguration of the street, but they would replace the existing sharrows. A motion and second were made by Fish and Gustafson recommend the city proceed with Alternate A in the plans for PI 5314, the Union and Lincoln Avenue street improvement project and the motion carried with Kvamme voting in opposition.

### **Letter of Intent from OSPTI**

OSPTI has submitted a letter of intent for the property behind the west liquor store. The council adjourned to a closed meeting at 7:43 am as allowed by MN Statute Section 13D.05, subd. 3(c). The discussion was tables at 8:06 am until the December 6 council meeting and the council did not adjourn back into an open meeting.

*Lynne Olson*