

City Council Minutes  
February 22, 2022

The Fergus Falls City Council met for a regular meeting on Tuesday February 22, 2022 at 5:30 pm in the City Council Chambers. Pastor Dave Foss gave the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Council members in attendance were Hicks, Hagberg, Kvamme, Rufer, Thompson, Arneson and Gustafson. Fish was absent.

### **Approval of Agenda**

A motion and second were made by Arneson and Hicks approving tonight's agenda with the removal of item #15 from the consent agenda and the motion carried.

### **Quote for Email System**

The city uses HCL Notes for its email system at an annual cost of \$3,379. Last year the council directed staff to explore other options due to the email delivery and calendar issues. Staff have obtained quotes and are recommending moving to Microsoft Outlook through High Point Networks. The migration to this new system will require an outside consultant to ensure the continuity of service including archiving of emails. The cost for the new system is \$28,200 with an annual recurring cost of \$30,600. The 2022 budget includes \$50,000 for the cost of this migration and needs an additional \$8,800 plus a 10% contingency due to the complexity of the work to be completed. Rufer was supportive of changing from our outdated system into an email and calendaring system that will be more in-line with more systems. Hicks agreed it was time to change our antiquated system and asked if any local companies provided quotes, which was confirmed they did not. Rufer offered **Resolution #39-2022** approving a quote from High Point Networks for an email system, which was seconded by Hicks and was adopted.

### **Consent Agenda**

The following items were approved under **Resolution #40-2022** by Hagberg: Motion approving the minutes from the February 7, 2022 City Council meeting and the February 16, 2022 Committee of the Whole meeting. Motion approving the following licenses: Metal Recycling Lakes Iron & Metal Inc., Fireworks Sales Fleet Farm (Phantom Fireworks); Full Liquor License Bigwood Event Center. **Resolution #41-2022** approving an increase in the service benefits for retiring paid on call firefighters. **Resolution #42-2022** accepting a donation from Lake Region Electric Cooperative to the Fergus Falls Fire Department for equipment purchases. **Resolution #43-2022** authorizing the city to submit a grant application to the Lake Region Arts Council for a River Art project. **Resolution #44-2022** setting a final cost hearing for PI 5958, the Campus View Development project for March 21, 2022 at 5:30 pm. **Resolution #45-2022** accepting an Airport Rescue Grant in the amount of \$32,000. Motion directing the City Attorney to draft changes to the City Code regarding city ward and precinct boundaries. **Resolution #46-2022** reestablishing the 2022 polling places. **Resolution #47-2022** approving budget adjustments. Motion appointing Katrina Johnson to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. **Resolution #48-2022** designating public hearing dates for the 2022 Single and Two Family Property Tax Rebate Program. **Resolution #49-2022** authorizing the city to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Children's First Finance for consulting services related to the city's acceptance in the Rural Child Care Innovation program's July cohort. **Resolution #50-2022** ordering the plans and specifications, accepting the plans and specifications and authorizing the advertising of bids for Public Improvement 9349, the Airport Runway, Taxiway and Apron Crack Fill/Joint Repairs project.

Motion directing the City Attorney to draft changes to parts of Chapter 154 relating to the definitions of hotels, motels and apartment hotels. The resolution was seconded by Thompson and was adopted.

### **Dr. Allen Magnuson Park**

Sarah Duffy requested the city consider changing the name of NP Park (in recognition of Northern Pacific Railroad) to the Dr. Allen Magnuson Park. Dr. Magnuson passed away last year after serving the community as a pediatrician for over 40 years. The children and families in the community were important to him and renaming this park would be a unique opportunity to honor his life and work. \$75,000-\$100,000 in donations are expected from Dr. Magnuson's family and friends and Lake Region Healthcare for the park and playground equipment. Lake Region Healthcare has offered to pay for the new park signage. Duffy said \$500,000 has been raised for the inclusive playground to date and the equipment will be installed this spring. The Park Board supports of the name change and council members commented on the well-deserved honor to a respected member of the community. Arneson offered [Resolution #51-2022](#) authorizing the renaming of NP Park to the Dr. Allen Magnuson Park, which was seconded by Kvamme and was adopted.

### **HRA Housing Rehab Guidelines**

Hicks offered [Resolution #52-2022](#) approving the HRA Small Cities Development Grant Housing Rehab Guidelines, which was seconded by Gustafson and was adopted.

### **Resolution of Accounts**

Hagberg offered a resolution authorizing the payments and claims in the amount of \$500,427.64, which was seconded by Rufer and was adopted.

### **Aquatics Center**

Bolton and Menk provided a revised project scope proposal for a \$9 million-\$11 million aquatics center. Their cost to provide this work would be \$27,050 plus \$4,000 for renderings. If the council still plans to bring this project to the voters in the November General Election, this work would be necessary to define the project scope and budget. Kvamme offered [Resolution #53-2022](#) approving a revised work scope with Bolton and Menk for the aquatics center, which was seconded by Hagberg.

Hicks spoke about the city's responsibility to be stewards of the city's funds and resources and thought it would be wise to take a break from collecting a sales tax after the library bonds are paid. The city has other commitments such as the downtown riverfront project to complete and having the splash pad component may be enough of a water feature for the community. He asked if the project could be scaled back, combined with existing indoor pools or possibly incorporate more water features into Pebble Lake which has easy trail access. He felt the project would be more successful if a Friends of the Pool group would gather public support and fundraising like the Friends of the Library did. He expressed concern with the city's long term financial commitment to the pool and how much subsidizing the city would be responsible for. Hicks also felt it will be difficult to get accurate price estimates in this market and inflationary factors. The public comments he hears is opposed to this project and feel this project is too big and too expensive for the community to take on at this time.

Thompson asked how much of the proposed user fees would cover the operating costs. Bolton and Menk would be providing an operating performa in their study. Arneson said he has participated on the aquatics center committee and believes the project scope is what the community wants based on the feedback they have received. He felt there has been too much time, money and effort put into the

project over the last few years to not proceed with bringing a project to the voters to consider on the November ballot. He expressed frustration with having to start the process of reviewing the design and costs again, but said it was important to get the project details and visuals ready for the public to view. Once there is more concrete information about the project and visuals to share, the aquatics committee can begin raising private funds for the facility. He viewed the additional \$31,050 as a necessary expense to move the project forward for the voters to make the final decision and would continue to be supportive of the project.

Rufer said it is the right time to move forward with offering amenities that other communities have. He felt our project could attract young families from surrounding communities to enjoy the waterpark, shop, eat in our community and consider relocation. He hears from residents who are very supportive of the project and feels spending the funds to update the project scope and design is a responsible investment for the city to make. Kvamme was in favor of spending the funds to get the right project for the community to vote on. He supported the time and effort the committee has put into the planning of the facility and feels if the city were to delay making a decision, the costs would continue to rise. The resolution approving a revised work scope with Bolton and Menk for the aquatics center was voted upon and was adopted with Hicks voting in opposition.

### **RTC Phase III Update**

City Administrator Andrew Bremseth said the city was planning to ask the council to consider the work scope for the RTC Phase III project. The school asked the city to delay that topic until they could propose a potential project for the RTC campus. Superintendent of Schools Jeff Drake said the district has been working on a strategic planning process and looking at options for a new K-3 elementary school. They are overcrowded at Kennedy Secondary School and are forced to make frequent changes in the elementary schools to transition kids from grade to grade. A new K-3 building would provide a better educational experience for our students and teachers. The RTC site would be an ideal spot to build this new school and would pay homage to the city's history. Drake said they plan to preserve the tower building, but would not use the attached wings. The school would like to bring a construction manager and architect into the tower to evaluate the viability of the project. If there is a favorable review, the school district would be interested in further dialogue with the city. Bremseth said a major component of the project would be identifying and securing funds to preserve the tower and removing the remaining structures. He felt this solution would be beneficial to the community and resolve an issue the city has been grappling with for more than 15 years. There would be room on a school campus to grow the tax base with housing and amenities that would complement the school. He suggested if the council were interested in this project that they adopt a motion directing staff to revise the work scope from Stantec to focus the remaining \$1.7 million in state funds for projects to preserve the tower.

Arneson felt this was an excellent opportunity to partner with the school and to use the campus in a way that would benefit the community. He felt this would be a prime location for the school and felt the existing RTC funds would be best used to preserve the tower. Rufer called this a "fabulous idea" and said he was excited to have the city and school work together on a project and use the state funding for preservation of the tower. Hicks agreed this was a good opportunity to reuse the campus and address the biggest issue the city has faced for years. He said renovation of the entire structure would be unlikely due to the amount of time and rising cost of construction and inflation. He felt a collaborative partnership between the city and school would be more likely to obtain the necessary

state funding. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Thompson to direct staff to revise the work scope for Phase III to only include tower restoration.

Kvamme felt this information was too new for the council to pivot on the plans they have making. He said a portion of the remaining \$1.7 million would be focused on the tower, but wanted to see the other funding allocated for the air quality issues, security and window projects in the E and W attached structures. He felt it was premature to dump the work that has been done to date and stated a project of this magnitude would take a long time with no guarantee for success and felt the school should continue looking for other possible sites. He believed the city needs to secure the structure and stated he would not support a motion for the city to change course. Arneson said he does not view the council's action as disregarding the previous work, but it is a request for staff to focus the preservation dollars solely on the tower preservation. If the project does not come to fruition, the city could continue working on the original work scope. He felt it was prudent for the city to focus on real redevelopment possibilities. The motion directing staff to revise the work scope for Phase III to only include tower restoration was called to a vote and was adopted with Kvamme voting in opposition.

After reviewing the city's parking restrictions and thanking crews for their work on the snow removal, the meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.

*Lynne Olson*