

Committee of the Whole
April 13, 2022

The Fergus Falls City Council met as a Committee of the Whole on April 13, 2022 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, Fish and Hagberg.

Legislative Update

City lobbyist Joel Carlson provided an update on the state's legislative activities this session. The legislature is on their spring break after passing budget and tax bills out of committee. The two parties are still quite divided and 5 weeks remain until the end of the session. He predicted there will be a tax bill since there is a large surplus and American Rescue Plan funds to be spent. If the ARPA funds are not spoken for by the end of the session, the federal legislation allows the Governor to use the funds at his discretion. A bonding bill is likely and contains the city's request for Phase II funding of the Downtown Riverfront project. The city has requested the authority to seek a sales tax approval by the voters in the November election and that authorization is contained in the tax bill. Carlson has also been working with LCCMR for funding of the former dairy project. He spoke about the impact of the new legislative districts after the redistricting process has been completed and noted there will be significant changes due to retirements and the new boundaries. There will likely be tax reductions, but whether the changes are temporary or permanent has yet to be determined. The outcome of the election will be foremost on the legislator's minds and Carlson said his number one priority for the city is the passing of a bonding bill.

Transitional Housing Use

Last year the Welcome House asked the city to allow transition housing for pregnant women in a R-1 zone. This was not allowable in this zone as more than five unrelated people would be living together temporarily on the property. A subcommittee of Planning Commission members and Council Member Kvamme met to explore how a request like this could be accomplished with a zoning change. The Planning Commission held a hearing and made the following recommendations for the council to consider:

- Adds a conditional use permit path for transitional housing in any residential or industrial zone. Transitional housing would be allowed in any business zone but would need to be on the second floor or above.
- Transitional housing is limited to being operated by certain entities.
- The number of people in a dwelling would be subject to health and safety related codes and not the zoning code's definition of a "family".
- A parking standard is established. If an organization wanted to provide fewer parking spaces, they could request a variance in addition to the conditional use application.
- If the housing ceases to be appropriately licensed, the city may begin proceedings to revoke the conditional use permit as provided in the zoning ordinance.

City Planner Karin Flom verified this would not change any requirements for the transitional housing at the Matthew House unless they expand. She explained the second floor requirement was to preserve commercial businesses on the ground floor in the downtown business district. Chief of Public Safety Kile Bergren said he felt the new language was acceptable with the exception of allowing this

type of housing in R-1 and possibly R-2 zones. He explained transitional housing can mean different types of housing and said group homes have not been a problem, but halfway houses and some of the Department of Corrections housing options have created problems for the department and neighbors. He preferred to see facilities with set rules and 24/7 staffing rather than allowing multiple people living together while in transition without any supervision. He believes the city has zoning regulations for a reason and requested the council be careful when making a policy change as the next type of organization looking for an exception may be problematic in a residential neighborhood. A motion and second were made by Fish and Hagberg to recommend the council direct the Planning Commission to revisit the allowed zoning for transitional housing projects with the Police Chief's input and the motion carried. Hicks asked staff to provide a map of the R-1 and R-2 districts when the topic comes back to the council for approval.

Dr. Allen Magnuson Park Update

Sarah Duffy said the new accessible playground at Dr. Allen Magnuson Park (formerly known as NP Park) is getting closer to reality. Construction activities are ready to proceed once the road restrictions are lifted. Affinity Plus is willing to provide a generous \$50,000 donation with the intention \$40,000 of the gift be used to purchase a ramped piece of play equipment geared towards children bound to a wheelchair and a communication board so non-verbal or autistic children can participate in play at the park. The other \$10,000 would be used toward the overall project cost. The fundraising efforts are approximately \$50,000 short of their \$575,000 goal with a number of pledges and grants still to come in. Duffy said they were not planning on this additional purchase, but the gift is contingent upon the monies being expended as the donor specified. A motion and second were made by Rufer and Fish to recommend the council authorize the purchase of the equipment as requested by Affinity Plus and the motion carried.

A motion and second were made by Fish and Hagberg to recommend the council approve the concrete quote for the Dr. Allen Magnuson Park to Skjeret Concrete in the amount of \$39,330 and the motion carried.

RTC Photography Request

The city has gotten two local photography requests the council was asked to consider. Jesse Thorstad would like access into the Kirkbride complex to create a 3D tour that can be shared with the public. The Daily Journal has also requested access to photograph the interior of the buildings to document the condition in conjunction with the city's 150th anniversary year. Both requests would be conducted at the same time to minimize city resources. Each party would be required to wear the proper PPE and sign waivers of liability. Hicks said he would be agreeable the requests if there was a condition the images taken must be available for the city to have and distribute as they see best fit without copyright infringement concerns. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Thompson to recommend the council authorize staff to work with Lakes Area 360 and the Daily Journal on photography projects inside the Kirkbride with the provision the city is able to use and distribute the images without restrictions and the motion carried.

YMCA Lifeguard Agreement

The Fergus Falls YMCA has partnered with the city for lifeguard services at Pebble Lake since 2008 and the agreement would call for services this summer as well. The \$25,000 agreement would be paid in 3 equal installments. The Y has already noted they will require an increase in the 2023 rates to reflect the higher wages they need to pay the lifeguard staff members. A motion and second were

made by Arneson and Hagberg to recommend the council approve the 2022 contract with the Fergus Falls YMCA to provide lifeguard services at Pebble Lake Beach and the motion carried.

Update on Recreation Projects

Public Works Director Len Taylor provided an update on the city's projects that provide recreation amenities to the community.

DeLagoon Park

- New underground wiring to all facilities will be complete soon
- Boat launch and parking lot were totally reconstructed last year
- Legion Field new dugouts will be built after the baseball season
- Volunteers will build a new batting cage at Farmers Field
- Archery park area was designated and set up by volunteers and staff

Pebble Lake Beach

- Lifeguards will staff the beach
- New dock sections are being considered for the swimming area

Athletic Park

- Conversion of two tennis courts to 6 pickleball courts this spring. One regulation tennis court will remain.

Higgins Dog Park

- Lights were recently added

Godel Park

- MN DNR donated a pier that was installed in 2021 and a path and parking lot will be installed this year

Adams Park

- The picnic shelter will have a knee wall built to attempt to keep water fowl out

Broken Down Dam

- New picnic tables will be placed, steps will be regularly maintained and clean-up of the area will be done as time allows

Dr. Allen Magnuson Park

- Sarah Duffy and the Kiwanis club were thanked for their work to renew this park and equipment

Other

- Native plantings will be placed in Adams, DeLagoon and Kennedy Parks in 2022
- Summer recreation program registration was opened on April 1. Within minutes Kids Kamp was filled. The program can expand if additional staffing can be secured.
- There are currently 27 disc golf holes at DeLagoon Park. Plans are underway for 9 holes to be located within Roosevelt Park

- The Park Board is working on the establishment of a curling league at the community arena this fall

Mayor Schierer commended Taylor and his staff for their efforts to provide so many amenities to the community. Kvamme asked that lady slipper flowers in the native plantings are identified and protected during park maintenance. Rufer said the Pedal Fergus Falls board would like the city to consider lowering the speed limit on residential side streets to 20 mph. This was requested to be on a future committee of the whole agenda and that Police and Engineering Departments be consulted for their thoughts.

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 am.

Lynne Olson