

Committee of the Whole Meeting  
April 27, 2022

The Fergus Falls City Council met as a Committee of the Whole on Wednesday April 27, 2022 at 7:00 am in the City Council Chambers. Mayor Schierer called the meeting to order and the following members were in attendance: Thompson, Arneson, Gustafson, Fish, and Kvamme. Hicks, Hagberg and Rufer were absent.

**Gate City Bank's Neighborhood Impact Program**

Representatives from Gate City Bank were present to announce the 2022 Neighborhood Impact Program, which offers low interest loans for home improvement projects to city residents. Their investment into this program will help with affordable housing and keeping our neighborhoods in good condition. The team presented a large ceremonial check to the Mayor.

**Lake Region Healthcare Update**

Lake Region Healthcare CEO Kent Mattson provided an overview of the organization, their mission, vision and values. Lake Region Healthcare is a non-profit 501(c) 3 charitable healthcare organization in the Minnesota Rural Health System. They operate two hospitals, ten clinic locations, a cancer care and research center, and senior living community. They have 1,100 employees and 120 healthcare providers. Their annual operating revenue is \$163 million and they are headquartered in Fergus Falls. It is their intention to remain community owned and governed and not be integrated into another healthcare system. They are however moving to a new electronic medical records system that will provide the transfer of medical records between Lake Region Healthcare and Sanford. He spoke about the new hires and recruitment needs for the organization. Mattson reviewed their strategic planning vision and goals, he spoke about their future needs for expansion as they have outgrown their space and expressed their continued commitment to the communities they serve.

**Traffic Requests and Updates**

Chief of Public Safety Kile Bergren said they have had many requests for reduced rates of speed, traffic signals and enforcement and he reviewed how these requests are handled. The Police Department works closely with the Public Works and Engineering Departments on traffic safety issues and they follow the guidance of the traffic laws to make these decisions and these solutions require time and money. They have been working on ways to improve the intersection at Union and Stanton to protect pedestrians and bicyclists and the upcoming street improvement projects in this area will address this intersection. Pedal Fergus Falls requested the speed limit on residential streets be lowered to 20 miles per hour and Bergren explained there are many factors that influence the speed limits including topography, parking, and site lines. Lowering the speed limit on these streets would require signs on each street, which is cost prohibitive and he encouraged the group to focus on one or two of the main problems than making a blanket change on all streets. There are 32 uncontrolled intersections in the community and city staff is working on practical solutions for the community. There was a question about the stop signs on Concord and Washington for the railroad tracks that are no longer being used. Bergren clarified the railroad has the jurisdiction ability to control traffic in the railroad right of way and they have placed the signs in these areas.

Mayor Schierer left the meeting at 7:54 am and Acting Mayor Justin Arneson took over the meeting responsibilities.

### **Lake Alice Grant Opportunity**

Dan Larson of WaterQuality 3D has been working with Senator Bill Ingebritgsen on a possible amendment to a legislative bill that would provide \$250,000 in grants to four governments including the City of Fergus Falls to improve the water issues. He spoke about the technology that would be employed, the potential to address water impairments in Lake Alice and suggested the city would have a better chance for success in receiving these funds if they provide a letter of support and actively seek out Senator Ingebritgsen's support for the amendment. Clarence Johnson provided a thorough overview of how this technology would not use chemicals to treat the water problems, but would help restore the lake's natural ecosystem by decreasing the levels of phosphorus and starving the algae in the lake. A motion and second were made by Kvamme and Fish to recommend the council approve and submit a letter of intent for this legislative amendment and the motion carried.

### **PI 5353, 2022 Mill and Overlay Project**

Project plans and specifications are complete for PI 5353, the 2022 mill and overlay project. The project will include portions of Sunset Drive, Foothill Court, Lenore Way, and Terrace Drive. If bids come in favorably, additional street segments could be added. The estimated construction cost is \$252,000 and the city has budgeted \$269,280 (including general engineering and contingency costs) for this improvement. A motion and second were made by Fish and Gustafson to recommend the council accept the project plans and specifications and authorize the advertising of bids for PI 5353 and the motion carried.

### **Easement for OTP**

Otter Tail Power Company is planning to replace the overhead power lines west of Tower Road near the roundabout. They would install new overhead lines adjacent to the existing lines and then remove the old lines to limit power interruptions. They are requesting an amendment to the existing easement to facilitate this construction in the city owned lot described as Lot 5, Block 1 on The Meadows plat. City staff are recommending revising the easement's legal description and Otter Tail Power Company will reimburse the city for their expenses. A motion and second were made by Thompson and Fish to recommend the council authorize the City Engineer and City Attorney to execute Otter Tail Power's easement request and the motion carried.

### **PI 5314, Union and Lincoln Avenue Improvement Project**

Plans and specifications are nearly complete for PI 5314, Union Avenue: Fir Avenue to Lincoln Avenue and Lincoln Avenue: Union Avenue to Friberg Avenue project. This 1.45 mile project will address street resurfacing, base patching, and ADA improvements. Portions of the curb, gutter and storm sewer will be replaced along Union Avenue to improve drainage. A temporary detour will be installed on Cavour during the Lincoln Avenue milling while the contractor works on the opposite side. The estimated probable cost of the project is \$1,200,000 of which 80% will be paid from federal sources while the remaining 20% will be covered by state funds. A motion and second were made by Fish and Thompson to recommend the council accept the project plans and specifications and authorize the advertising of bids and the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 am

*Lynne Olson*