

Committee of the Whole  
June 1, 2022

The Fergus Falls City Council met as a Committee of the Whole on June 1, 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: Arneson, Gustafson, Fish, Hagberg, Kvamme and Thompson. Hicks and Rufer were absent.

**Hoods for Heroes**

The Fergus Falls Fire Department applied for and was awarded 37 personal protective hoods from the Minnesota Firefighters Foundation. This equipment will provide better protection by blocking the ability of smoke and carcinogen particles to transfer through the material. Each hood has a value of \$100. A motion and second were made by Fish and Hagberg to recommend the council accept the protective gear and the motion carried.

**Riverfront Pavilion Agreement and Policies**

The new Riverfront Pavilion will be available for public use on July 1 and a draft of the rental agreement and facility policies were reviewed. The structure will have 30 tables and 130 chairs available for public use during planned events. Any additional needs would need to be provided by the user group. Kvamme asked glass containers to be allowed for items sold at the Farmers Market. He also had questions on allowing decorations of the facility, signage and he asked the City Attorney to weigh in on the areas regarding restricting use and discrimination. A motion and second were made by Arneson and Thompson directing staff to bring back additional clarity on these issues at the June 6 council meeting.

**Request to Sell City Owned Property on Valley Drive**

Years ago, the city granted permission to the owners of 524 Valley Drive to care for the city property abutting their property. They have planted trees and shrubs on the property and are now asking for the opportunity to purchase the property for \$10,000. The council requested staff bring a map of the area and a staff recommendation to the June 6 council meeting for their consideration.

**Curling Donation**

The city was approached by a group of citizens to start a curling program in the north rink at the community arena. They have been willing to raise funds for equipment to support a curling club. One of the members has the expertise to teach city staff how to prepare the ice and this league would run on Sunday afternoons/evenings and possibly be available for the school to use for Physical Education classes on Mondays. The equipment would be removed when hockey is using the facility. The ice time would be covered by user fees. A motion and second were made by Fish and Kvamme to recommend the council accept donations for the purchase of equipment for a Parks and Recreation Curling Club and the motion carried. Kvamme asked for an update on pickleball courts as requested by a group of residents earlier this year. Public Works Director Len Taylor said staff will be converting two of the tennis courts at Athletic Park into three pickleball courts and hope to have the courts available for use mid-summer.

**DeLagoon Park Update**

The city has the legislative authority to seek voter approval on two possible sales tax questions at the

November 8, 2022, General Election. The city has been granted the authority to seek up to \$5.2 million for the DeLagoon Park improvement project. Bolton and Menk was hired to update the cost estimates for the project that initially included updating the campground master plan and ensuring the campsites comply with the Department of Health requirements for water and sewer services onsite, an updated concessions area and restroom at the softball complex, a new concessions and restroom at the softball complex, updating the lighting at the five softball fields, two baseball fields and four soccer fields, and new fencing at the softball fields, baseball fields, soccer complex, around the BMX track and archery range. The updated estimates were presented as:

Campground master plan updates	\$2,390,850
Sewer and water utility extensions	\$1,137,100
Concessions/restroom buildings	\$1,218,750
Lighting	\$3,075,000
Fencing	\$ 899,655
Total estimated cost	\$8,721,355

The proposal was recently reviewed by the Park Board who has recommended further refinement of the proposal to fit the \$5.2 million budget. They suggested city staff construct the restroom/concession facilities and some of the projects be put on hold until time and budget allow. The council discussed the merits of using the city’s water and sewer enterprise funds to maximize the project budget. The city has traditionally included the cost of utilities within the project price but would have the legal ability to use the enterprise funds if the council chooses. They commented on the economic benefits of bringing visitors to the city through the campgrounds and ballfields, the need to upgrade the facilities and the importance of upgrading the soccer complex facilities. They asked if the city could partner with Otter Tail Power Company on the lighting and were told they do not have programs for sport field lighting, and staff are looking into other possible funding sources. Staff was asked to bring recommendations on lowering the cost for the restroom/concession facilities and the financial impact of funding the sewer and water utility extensions through the city’s enterprise funds. A motion and second were made by Gustafson and Arneson to recommend the council continue this discussion on June 6 and the motion carried.

**Permanent Supportive Housing Project**

Mikel Olson of the HRA provided an update on the Garitz Grove permanent supportive housing project planned for 1161 Friberg Avenue. Planning for the project that would provide stable and affordable housing with onsite services began in 2019. A pandemic, rising project costs and worker shortages have delayed the project. Four bids were received in March, and all came in over budget. There have been extensive efforts to find ways to save money on the project and a successful application was submitted to Federal Home Loan Bank for additional project funding. There is a 90–120-day window to close on the project. The service provider team is wavering between a fall of 2022 groundbreaking versus starting the project in the spring of 2023 with the hope the material costs go down. Olson spoke about the level of community support for the project and was encouraged by Kvamme to start the project sooner rather than later.

**New Business: Street Striping and Sharrows**

Kvamme asked to discuss the city’s policy on painting bicycle sharrows on the street. Observing the traffic patterns as a resident of Lake Alice, he does not feel the designated areas are being followed by the pedestrians, bikers and they provide a false sense of security. He asked if the city’s resources could

be better spent. Arneson felt the designated areas are working as they are meant and reducing the speed of vehicle traffic could help. Taylor said the city paints the sharrows on Lake Alice, Westside Drive and in the downtown areas and said the time and labor would be a cost savings to the city if the marking was discontinued. Gustafson felt the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) should be consulted for their input and suggested they come back with a recommendation prior to the city doing the striping this spring and summer. She also felt the markings around Lake Alice may be ignored by local residents, but they are important for visitors to distinguish the area meant only for pedestrians. Thompson agreed the sharrows create a false sense of security around the lake and downtown. Staff was asked to bring this topic back for further discussion after receiving input from the BPAC group. The city will not proceed with the striping in these areas until a council decision is made.

### **New Business: Update on Sales Tax Questions**

Kvamme asked staff to provide an update on the two sales tax questions being proposed to the voters at the November General Election. When the legislature adjourned on May 23, they did not pass a bonding bill or a tax bill, which would affect the city's ability to complete projects. City Administrator Andrew Bremseth explained it will be difficult to move forward on the projects if the legislature does not reconvene in a special session. The city has the legislative authority for a \$5.2 million improvement project at DeLagoon Park as discussed earlier today. The aquatics center is more challenging in that the city currently has legislative authority to ask for \$7.8 million, but the estimated project cost is considerably more than that. The city's legislative request for an additional \$3 million has not yet been appropriated and without these additional funds, there won't be enough money in the sales tax request to adequately fund the project. If the legislature does reconvene and the bills pass, the city will have to move quickly to provide information and renderings for the public to view prior to the election. Without this special session, the project could have to wait for two more years or scale it back even further.

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 am

*Lynne Olson*