

Committee of the Whole Minutes
January 31, 2024

The Fergus Falls City Council met as a Committee of the Whole on January 31, 2024, at 7:00 am in the City Council Chambers. Mayor Schierer called the meeting to order, and the following council members were in attendance: Thompson, Rachels, Hicks, Fish, Job, Kvamme, Rufer, and Kremeier.

West Central Initiative Fund

West Central Initiative (WCI) is a 501c3 organization that can accept donations. The council was asked to consider establishing a Fergus Falls Community Fund component fund to accept donations for various city projects. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Rachels to recommend the council establish a Fergus Falls Community Fund with West Central Initiative and appoint the Investment Committee, Finance Director and Assistant Finance Director as the Advisory Committee and the motion carried.

Fire Relief Association Service Benefits

The Fergus Falls Fire Department Relief Association Board of Trustees is seeking an increase in service benefits for retiring paid on call firefighters from \$5,900 to \$6,300 per year of active service effective March 1, 2024. The request falls within the established funded ratio and there is no budget impact on the city. A motion and second were made by Rachels and Fish to recommend the council approve an increase in service benefits for retiring paid on-call firefighters and the motion carried.

Pebble Lake Golf Course Lease Agreement

Council members Hicks and Kvamme, city staff and Pebble Lake Golf Course board representatives met to discuss an extension to the lease with the Pebble Lake Golf Club until December 31, 2024. The agreement states the golf club annually funds the first \$5,000 of capital improvements and the use of funds within the city budget requires the approval of the Public Works Director. Funding requests beyond the 2024 approved budget requires council approval. The city's 2024 budget includes \$43,913 for the Pebble Lake Golf Course plus unexpended 2023 capital outlay funds. The golf board representatives agree to the proposed lease agreement language. A motion and second were made by Kvamme and Hicks to recommend the council approve a one-year lease extension with the Pebble Lake Golf Course and the motion carried with Rachels voting in opposition.

Grazing for Vegetative Management Ordinance

Last August the council was asked to consider an ordinance allowing the use of goats for vegetative management and controlling invasive species of weeds. City staff researched ordinances from other cities and proposed language addressing the permit process, fencing and the written consent of neighboring property owners. Suggested amendments regarding signage and fencing will be incorporated into the first reading of the ordinance. A motion and second were made by Kvamme and Fish to recommend the council hold a first reading of Ordinance 52, Eighth Series, Temporary Goat Grazing for Vegetative Management on February 5 and to add a \$100 per application permit fee to the 2024 fee schedule. The motion carried with Thompson voting in opposition.

Final Plat for Timber Cove Addition

The preliminary plat for the Timber Cove Addition at 1151/1161 Friberg Avenue was approved in 2021. Now that the building is completed, the final plat was reviewed by the Planning Commission and was recommended to be approved. The footprint changed to include a stormwater area and small

shelter structure. HRA Director Mikel Olson was asked to give an update on the permanent supportive housing project called Garitz Grove. The building has 24 one-bedroom units whose residents have mental health issues or are homeless and require the use of multiple service programs such as case management, skilled nursing, and mental health counseling. Mahube OTWA will help the Fergus Falls HRA with the assessment process and the units will be ready for tenant occupancy in February or March. Council members provided supportive comments about the facility and spoke about the assistance this project will provide law enforcement and emergency services by reducing mental health service calls. A motion and second were made by Kvamme and Rufer to approve a final plat for a two-lot subdivision of Timber Cove Addition at 1151/1161 Friberg Avenue as requested by the Housing and Redevelopment Authority of Fergus Falls and the motion carried.

DeLagoon Park Improvement Update

The DeLagoon Park improvements are at the 90% review stage with plans to bid the project in bid. The Minnesota Administrative Rules require a bathroom for the campground and Grant Kuper from Bolton and Menk provided an update on the restroom/bathroom options. In the design process staff recommended a structure that is functional, easy to clean, has a low maintenance roof, plastic/polyethylene toilet partitions, manually operated toilets and sinks and no wood interior. Bolton and Menk looked at four options: the estimate for the Cedar Forest Products model was \$680,000. A traditional build quote from a local contractor was \$675,000-\$725,000. The estimated cost for the Public Restroom Company structure was \$655,000-\$755,000. The Huffcut Building is a precast concrete modular building would be the most cost-effective solution to meet the city's goals of longevity, durability, and low maintenance. The estimated cost of the Huffcut Building is \$580,000 and the construction costs for the underground utilities and building foundation would need to be bid separately from the building costs. Because this is a traditional design-bid build process, rather than a prefabricated structure, there is a need to hire an architect to produce the plans and specifications and these services would be bid separately. The council was in consensus to maintain the current bid document process specifying a Huffcut brand restroom/bathhouse building. If the project bids are approved, the DeLagoon campground will be closed for the 2024 season but would be ready for occupancy in 2025. The \$5.2 million improvements at DeLagoon Park were approved by the voters at the 2022 General Election and would be funded by the local option sales tax.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 am

Lynne Olson