

Committee of the Whole
February 14, 2024

The Fergus Falls City Council held a Committee of the Whole meeting on February 14, 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: Rachels, Hicks, Fish, Job, Kvamme, Kremeier and Thompson. Rufer was absent.

DeLagoon Park Improvements

The plans and specifications for City Project 9148, the DeLagoon Park Improvements are complete. The base bid for the campground site and utility improvements is \$3.6 million and the total project approved by the voters \$5.2 million. The project will be bid as a base bid plus 13 alternates to enhance flexibility in the project. The scope of the campground improvements includes 42 RV sites, 9 tent sites, a handful of primitive camp sites, a restroom structure, electrical and sanitary sewer connections, and improvements near the archery and shooting range. Utilities will also be extended towards Shoreview Drive and installed for softball and soccer complex restroom structures. Other improvements in the park including lighting and the baseball and softball fields. A motion and second were made by Fish and Thompson to recommend the council accept the project plans and specifications and to authorize the advertising of bids and the motion carried.

RAISE Grant

The city is working with Otter Tail County to submit a joint application for the federal Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application. The grant would provide connectivity between the Glacial Edge, Central Lakes, and Heart of the Lakes Trails. Another component of the application focuses on the construction of three roundabouts on Fir Avenue. The county is determining the total cost of the grant request and final locations for the trails and roundabouts. A more defined scope would be determined once the funds have been secured. A motion and second were made by Fish and Kvamme to recommend the council offer a resolution of support for the RAISE grant application and the motion carried.

Aeronautics Grant

Last year the city applied for a MnDOT Aeronautics Equipment Grant and was successfully awarded \$74,300 to replace a tractor that pulls a bat-wing style mower for the airport property. The current tractor can be placed back into the city's fleet. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Rachels to recommend the council accept MnDOT's state grant offer for an airport tractor and the motion carried.

2024 Seal Coat Projects

Plans and specifications are substantially complete for PI 5372, the 2024 seal coat improvement project. The estimated construction cost is \$244,800 and if the bids are favorable, the city can add up to a 25% increase to the contract price. \$173,100 was budgeted this year for seal coat applications plus \$100,000 carried over from the previous year. The total project cost of \$273,100 includes engineering, contingency and construction costs. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Kremeier to recommend the council accept the project plans and specifications for PI 5372, the 2024 seal coat improvements and authorize the advertising of bids and the motion carried.

Ground Storage Reservoir Replacement Project

Tom Welle of Apex Engineering Group explained the city has five existing water storage facilities including ground storage reservoirs (GSR) and elevated tanks. The facilities range in age from 1914 to 2007 for a total water storage of 3.865 MG. The condition of the 1914 water storage facility is a concern and Apex developed a computer system model to evaluate and analyze the existing water system and confirm the status of the 1914 GSR. The goals for a water distribution system are to maintain adequate pressure from 40 to 80 psi under all conditions, provide adequate and efficient flowrates to meet residential, commercial, and industrial customer demands, fire protection to meet ISO requirements and the water quality meets the health standards established by the Minnesota Department of Health. The 40-80 psi was maintained during maximum day demands with and without 1914 GSR in-service. No deficiencies were found for velocity or head loss in pipelines 14" or smaller and one deficiency was discovered in a critical 16" pipeline leaving the city vulnerable if a pipe were to break. The city's existing pumping facilities can meet all pumping conditions for the foreseeable future and their report showed no new storage is needed which will result in a savings of approximately \$2.7 to \$3 million since the 1914 GSR will not be replaced. A new industrial customer with high water use could change this. If the school constructs a new elementary school, the modeling will project the anticipated water usage and pressure needs.

Apex does recommend conducting a thorough evaluation of the water treatment facility as it was not included in their study. The water treatment facility was constructed in 1935 and the last major expansion was completed in 1960. Staff have done a remarkable job of maintaining and extending the life of the equipment and facility. A reduction in storage with the demolition of the 1914 GSR will lead to increased operational hours of the facility during peak demands and the equipment needs to be evaluated. Disinfection requirements and adequate contact time must be confirmed by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) before decommissioning and demolition can occur. The next steps would be abandoning and demolition of the 1914 ground storage reservoir pending MDH approval, executing a facility plan for the evaluation of the existing water treatment facility, SCADA upgrades, unidirectional flushing program and combining high pressure zones.

The 1914 GSR must be demolished as it is in poor condition, an eyesore and on the verge of collapse. It cannot be removed completely due to the risk of it being so close to the other ground surface tank and its potential to damage that as well. The top would be removed and the walls taken below grade, top soil added and the surface cleaned up. The funds being requested for the replacement of the ground storage reservoir have been planned for in the city's budget. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Fish to recommend the council accept Interstate Engineering's (Apex) design and construction administration professional services proposal for demolition in the amount of \$125,000 and accept Apex Engineering's professional services proposal for the development of a unidirectional flushing program in the amount of \$10,000.

Minnesota Department of Health Drinking Water Revolving Fund

In 2022 the Environmental Protection Agency announced new rules for cities requiring the removal of service pipes that contain lead and copper as they have been negatively linked to long-term impacts on human health and water quality. The new rule requires communities to identify lead service lines and develop a plan to mitigate the risk of lead service lines until the lines can be replaced. Over 300 homes are be serviced by lead/galvanized service lines throughout the city. Costs associated with the service line replacements will be borne by the property owners and are estimated to be thousands of dollars at each location. The city is seeking authorization to apply for a Minnesota Department of

Health Drinking Water Revolving Fund to help fund the replacement of lead/galvanized water service lines from the private portion of the line (stop box to house). If successful, the funds would be granted to the city and individual homeowners affected by these service lines could apply to the city for reimbursement. A motion and second were made by Rachels and Thompson to recommend the council authorize staff to apply to the Minnesota Department of Health Drinking Water Revolving Fund for funds to replace the lead/galvanized water service lines and the motion carried.

Business Development for Fergus Falls Grant

Business Development for Fergus Falls (BDFP) is the body that administers and maintains the city's loan pools and there has been an increase in project costs related to business development. As of the end of 2023 they have a loan balance of \$1,557,114.09 with \$2,036,667.39 available for project funding. BDFP is seeking authorization to apply for up to \$500,000 in United States Department of Agriculture for a Rural Business Development Grant. The grant funds would be used to contribute to the economic wellbeing of the area, promote growth, expansion, and development of business concerns. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Rachels to recommend the council authorize the application for financial assistance from the USDA's Rural Business Development Grant program to grow the Revolving Loan Funds managed by Business Development for Fergus Falls and the motion carried.

Amendment to Definition of a Hotel

Two developers working on local hotels have requested the city amend City Code 154.002. The code reads a hotel must have a reception desk staffed at all hours. This language is outdated as many hotels offer online keys or apps to enter the rooms. Kremeier expressed safety concerns and wanted documentation that the flour mill developer stated their hotel would be staffed with front desk staff. Other council members commented they find this a common practice in their personal travel experiences and none of them could recollect the developer making such a claim. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Rachels to recommend the council amend City Code 154.002 and hold a first reading of the ordinance on February 20 and the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 am

Lynne Olson