

Committee of the Whole
August 14, 2024

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

PI 9353, Airport Masterplan and Airport Layout Plan

Public Improvement 9353 is the Fergus Falls Airport Masterplan and Airport Layout Plan. The estimated project cost is \$368,200. 90% of the funding comes from federal grant funds; 5% of the funds will be contributed by the state and the city's local Airport 456 Fund will pay the remaining 5%. The state companion grants were presented for approval. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Fish to recommend the council accept State Grants 1057671 & 1057628 for Public Improvement 9353 and the motion carried.

Airport Rescue Grant Program

A motion and second were made by Rachels and Kvamme to recommend the council accept State Grant 1057675 for the Airport Rescue Grant Program and the motion carried.

PI 9148, the DeLagoon Campground Project

Grant Kuper of Bolton & Menk gave an update on DeLagoon Park campground and lighting project. The project was awarded to Comstock Construction on May 6 and they were provided a notice to proceed on June 6. Comstock was to start work on the campground improvements the week of August 5 and all underground utilities, site grading and bathhouse installation was to be complete during the 2024 construction season. Asphalt paving and final turf would be established in early 2025. Contractual completion milestones were developed so the city can utilize the campground for the entire season. These dates include completion of seeding by November 1, 2024; sufficient completion so the owner can use the improvement for the intended purpose by May 9, 2024; punch list items completed and all parties agreeing the work is complete by July 18, 2025. Comstock will not meet the contracted completion dates making it unlikely the campground will be ready for use until mid-summer 2025. Bolton & Menk will monitor the contractor's progress and dates and has notified them the city intends to enforce the liquidated damages including lost revenue from the campground not being operational. The softball complex lights are complete and functioning. Work will begin in the fall/late winter at the American Legion and Farmer's Field, so the project doesn't interfere with the baseball season. Kuper answered questions about the reason for the delay, possible project phasing, and the need to get grass fully established before allowing camping at the sites.

Emergency Medical and Rescue Equipment

Staff requested the use of \$22,000 of the State Public Safety Funds to replace and/or upgrade a variety of emergency medical, trauma and rescue equipment to be used by the fire and police departments for their responses to medical and trauma related emergencies and rescue events. A motion and second were made by Fish and Job to recommend the council approve the use of state public safety funds to upgrade and replace emergency and medical rescue equipment and the motion carried.

HRA Levy Request

HRA Executive Director Mikel Olson requested the approval of the statutory maximum levy that provides nearly \$255,989 to the HRA. This is an increase of 5% from last year and allows the organization to continue their mission of meeting the housing needs of lower-income families and individuals within the City of Fergus Falls. He spoke about their housing services and waiting lists. Kvamme felt the request was consistent with past requests and spoke of the value of the programming to many residents. Kremeier recalled last year's request included funding to staff the Garitz Grove facility on a 24/7 basis. He asked why that staffing has not been hired and remarked the facility has generated a call for police services which affects taxpayer funds. Olson acknowledged their proposal did include additional staffing and that position has not been filled. Hicks felt the Fergus Falls HRA provides a valuable service of providing stability to many people. A motion and second were made by Fish and Kvamme to recommend the council approve the HRA levy request and the motion carried with Kremeier voting in opposition.

Charter Communications Franchise Ordinance

The city's telecommunications franchise agreement with Charter Communications will expire in 2026 and they have reached out to the city to begin the renewal process. They have recommended a few minor amendments that staff is comfortable with. 3% of the gross revenues are used to fund the local PEG Access. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Rachels to recommend the council hold a first reading of a franchise ordinance with Charter Communications on August 19 and to set a public hearing for the ordinance on September 3, 2024, at 5:30 pm and the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 am

Lynne Olson