

Committee of the Whole Meeting  
October 2, 2024

The Fergus Falls City Council held a Committee of the Whole meeting on October 2, 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: Kremeier, Rachels, Hicks, Fish, Job, Kvamme and Rufer.

**Plantings in City Boulevards**

There is a discrepancy between City Code Sections 95.26 and 153.05C regarding plants and landscaping in the city's right-of-way (boulevard). 95.26 does not allow planting in the boulevard while 153.05C does. Staff recommended the inconsistency be resolved by amending 153.05C and not allowing planting or landscaping in the city boulevard. Len Taylor cited examples of bricks or rocks in the right-of-way causing extensive damage to city equipment during utility work or snow removal. The council discussed how to enforce the code, a potential timeline, responsibility for the right of way, and certain situations that have become especially problematic. It was suggested homeowners be informed they must remove rocks, bricks and large objects from the boulevard prior to winter and to not replant these areas in the spring. A motion and second were made by Rufer and Rachels to recommend the council direct the City Attorney to update City Code 153.05C to not allow planting or landscaping in the city right-of-way and the motion carried.

**West Central Initiative Downtown Signage Project**

Two years ago, West Central Initiative received a grant to place temporary wayfinding signs depicting the estimated time and distance to certain downtown attractions and the project is completed. Mallory Jarvi shared the survey results that people responded they were more likely to walk or bike to these places rather than drive.

**City Project 7774, Lake Alice Grit Chambers**

Interstate Engineering provided a professional engineering services proposal for the final design of City Project 7774, the Lake Alice grit chambers water quality improvement project. The total project cost is \$686,000 and the city has secured a \$500,000 grant for the project with the remaining \$186,000 to be funded from the stormwater enterprise fund. Tentative construction would take place in 2025. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Rachels to recommend the council accept Interstate Engineering's professional services proposal for final design in an amount not to exceed \$49,870 and the motion carried.

**PI 5352, Friberg and Pebble Lake Road Resurfacing Projects**

Friberg Avenue from Lincoln to Fir and Pebble Lake Road from Arlington to TH210 is scheduled for a mill and overlay in 2026 from the State Transportation Improvement Program. The project scope includes resurfacing (mill and overlay), base patching and ADA improvements over the 1.82 miles of the project. The total project cost is estimated at \$2,255,000 with 80% to be paid with federal funds. The remaining 20% of the funding would come from state aid funds and would cover the engineering costs and contract administration. The project would be slated for 2026. A motion and second were made by Fish and Kvamme to recommend the council initiate PI 5352 and to accept Moore Engineering's professional services agreement through final design in the amount of \$342,900 and the motion carried.

### **Cannabis Selection Policy**

Ordinance 59, Cannabis Business and Sales, Section 121.08.4 states if multiple applications for a state-licensed cannabis retail business are received within a 30-day period and the total would exceed the maximum number of registered businesses permitted under Section 121.11, the City Council may create a policy regarding this selection policy.” The Council Cannabis Committee has proposed a Cannabis Selection Policy that includes criteria for an application and a scoring system the City Council would complete if there were more than two applicants for a city license. Hicks requested more definition should be given to scoring areas that may be subjective. Job felt there should be additional information inserted into the experience and qualifications area. The policy would need to be ready when the cannabis licensing moratorium ends on January 1, 2025. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Rufer to recommend the council directing staff to refine the policy and bring it to the November 27 Committee of the Whole meeting and the motion carried.

### **Sign Ordinance Amendments**

The Planning Commission has been updating the city’s sign ordinance since the summer of 2023. Klara Beck presented the proposed changes which include the purpose and intent, updated definitions and terminology, exemptions to the code, clarification of computation methods and the permitting process, updates regulations for temporary signs, creates a stand-alone section for billboards and includes tables detailing the permitted sizes, locations and types of signage for all zoning districts. A motion and second were made by Rachels and Kvamme to recommend the council direct the City Attorney to draft the proposed updates to City Code Chapter 154.70 through 154.77 and the motion carried.

### **Other Business**

Rufer said council candidate Mark Leighton send a campaign text message falsely claiming the city was increasing the tax levy by 17.7%, whereas the council unanimously approved a 2025 preliminary tax levy increase of 9.75%. Rufer felt the city should provide voters with accurate information.

The work force housing grant for the Checkers site was not successfully funded. The structures at 801 W Stanton will continue to be demolished and the site cleaned up by November 1. The city and the proposed developer will continue to explore avenues to provide workforce housing at this site and the city is still able to use the state grant funds to acquire the property.

The meeting adjourned at 7:49 am

*Lynne Olson*