

Committee of the Whole Meeting  
October 30, 2024

The Fergus Falls City Council held a regular meeting on October 30, 2024 at 7:00 am in the City Council Chambers. Mayor Schierer called the meeting to order, and the following members were in attendance: Fish, Job, Kvamme, Rufer, Kremeier, Rachels and Hicks. Rufer was absent.

**CP 5964, Cleveland Avenue Improvement Project**

Cleveland Avenue from Franklin and Fir is a potential reconstruction project for 2025 as the street surface and underlying utilities are beyond their useful life. If the project moves forward, a portion of the reconstruction would be funded through 429 special assessments and appraisal services would be needed. Funding options will be determined after completing the preliminary engineering report and preliminary design. Staff will bring back an updated Capital Improvement Plan and possible street improvement bond plan. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Kremeier to recommend the council initiate Public Improvements 5375, 7223 & 8240, to combine them into City Project 5964 and accept Patchin Messner's professional services proposal for the special benefit analysis in the amount of \$9,000 and the motion carried.

**2025 Street & Utility Reconstruction Project**

The street and utility reconstruction of Sheridan and Arlington from Channing to Alcott and Bancroft from Sheridan to Arlington is proposed for a 2025 or 2026 project. A portion of this project would be funded by 429 special assessments. A motion and second were made by Job and Fish to recommend the council initiate public improvements 5379, 7226 & 8241, to combine them into City Project 5963, to accept Patchin Messner's professional services proposal for the special benefit analysis in an amount not to exceed \$9,500 and to order the Preliminary Engineering Report and the motion carried.

**Bio-Solid Land Lease**

The city hauls 1.75 million gallons (300 semi-loads) of bio-solids each year onto farm sites for fertilizer. Each site is regulated by the MPCA and in the spring there are limited sites due to road restrictions. Staff are proposing entering into a lease agreement for 10-12 years to utilize a 65-acre parcel of land approximately 3 miles from the wastewater treatment plant. It is on a 10-ton road that would not be affected by spring road restrictions. The lease amount would be \$50.00 per acre or \$3,250 annually. A motion and second were made by Rachels and Hicks to recommend the council authorize entering into a lease agreement with Marlys C. Schmidt Trust (Neil Schmidt) to utilize a 65-acre parcel of land for bio-solids and to authorize staff to discuss a future purchase of this property and the motion carried.

**Sculpture Walk Project Manager**

Public Arts Commission Chair Kim Embretson announced the Veden Trust has agreed to fully fund the first three years of the sculpture walk (\$65,100). Six outdoor sculptures that have been approved by the council would be installed along Lincoln Avenue from Union to Cascade from May to April and rotate annually. The sculptures would hopefully draw visitors of the new riverfront improvements to the shopping options along Lincoln Avenue. The Veden Trust's funding would include an annual \$4,000 stipend and \$500 annual expense budget for a project manager. The project manager would be charged with the recruitment, securing, installing and promoting of the artists and their sculptures, maintain a database of potential artists, a record keeping system for reporting, and coordinating with staff to establish the sculpture walk. A motion and second were made by Kvamme and Fish to

recommend the council authorize staff to issue a Request for Qualifications to hire a project manager for the Fergus Falls Sculpture Walk and the motion carried.

### **New Business**

The Friends of the FFM Airport wish to increase general and commercial aviation at the airport and would like to explore establishing a regional airport authority. The St. Cloud Airport Manager spoke to the friends board about their transition from a city-owned, levy supported entity into a regional airport in 2021 and the functions of their volunteer board. Hicks spoke about the advantages of regional status including spreading out the tax base, creating more opportunities for federal and state funding and being able to extend runways to accommodate bigger aircraft. The Friends of the FFM Airport are requesting authorization to engage local and regional governing boards to discuss the feasibility and benefits from the creation of a regional airport authority. No official action would be taken unless approved by the City Council. A motion and second were made by Hicks and Rachels to recommend the council authorize the Friends of the FFM Airport to engage local and regional governing boards to explore the feasibility of a regional airport authority and the motion carried.

Rachels requested a tax levy update. Bill Sonmor reminded the council that the preliminary budget of 9.75% was approved in September. The Tax Levy Committee has been meeting prior to presenting the final budget on December 2. As of today, they have lowered the levy to 5-6% which is due to the city receiving 20 years of electrical generation transition aid, not filling a vacant position and other various reductions. The Tax Levy Committee will continue working on the final budget and Mayor Schierer thanked the committee for their work noting they started the process with 9.1% of fixed costs.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 am

*Lynne Olson*