

October 11, 2011

A work session meeting of the City Council was held on the above date. Mayor Simonson called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. The following were present: Council members Connie Amos, Jim Schneider, Sally Swanson and Mayor Randall Simonson. Council member Chris Ness was absent. Staff present: City Administrator Anne Hurlburt, City Attorney Dave Hebert and Deputy Clerk Brenda Eklund.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Swanson, seconded by Schneider, moved to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried 4-0.

UPTOWN SEWER SYSTEM ISSUES

City Administrator Hurlburt brought forth several issues in which direction from the Council is needed in order to develop an ordinance, fee schedule and maintenance policy for the Uptown sewer system.

One of the first issues concerned defining what parts of the Uptown sewer system are the common components and the responsibility of the City, and what components are the private responsibilities of the users or property owners. It was agreed that the drainfield and the force main on the west side of Olinda Trail are common components that serve all the users and are a shared component.

The Community Center and Warming House connection was then discussed. The system has a series of tanks on the property which serve no other users. The pumping and maintenance costs have been paid for out of the general fund budgets and the costs have not been charged to the Uptown sewer users.

The next connection upstream is the Gammelgarden Museum. The Museum hooked up to the Uptown system some years ago, but records indicate that a connection fee was never paid. There are three tanks on-site which serve no other users. Mayor Simonson stated that the tanks are located on the Museum property as their resource and should be considered the Museum's responsibility. Council was in consensus with this position. In December 2010, staff sent a letter to the Gammelgarden Museum with a request for payment of the collection fee, calculated according to the remaining life of the system when the connection occurred. No response was received from Gammelgarden regarding this notice. Council will review this request at their next meeting and discuss sending a second notice.

There are two tanks on the Elim Lutheran Church property that discharge to the Uptown Septic Tank 2. One is for the former parsonage, the only residence on the system. Historically, maintenance for these tanks has been charged to the Uptown System. Again, it was the consensus of the council that these should be considered private tanks on private property.

Administrator Hurlburt noted that as with the Gammelgarden tanks, the County may not have records of the Elim tanks and will need to add them to their database for septic system enforcement, to ensure that they are periodically maintained.

The installation of water meters was discussed. Each of the users has a basic water meter used to estimate the volume of wastewater they contribute to the system. The recent Schmitt/Edward Jones connection required that the building owner pay for and install a type of meter approved by the city. Council was in agreement that the practice of having the owners be responsible for the purchase and installation of the water meters continue. This will be written into the ordinance with a statement regarding potential tampering and the city's jurisdiction over the meter.

Administrator Hurlburt summarized the council's position on this issue. The direction given was to designate that all components on private property (tanks, water meters, service line connections) be the responsibility of the private user and the maintenance costs not be charged back to the common users of the system.

The second issue brought forth was how to handle the financing of the improvements. The improvements are estimated to be \$99,601. During budget sessions, council recommended that the improvements be financed by a loan from the Capital Improvement Fund. The interest rate and length of the loan were discussed. The preference was to charge an interest rate of 4% (about 2% over what a five-year CD could earn) for a length of time of either five or seven years. Administrator Hurlburt will prepare an amortization analysis with these terms.

The Council then discussed how to allocate the costs in a fair and equitable manner. Administrator Hurlburt explained how a public policy investment is important to maintain a viable downtown business district.

Council member Schneider recommended that a base rate be determined based on the type of establishment and strength of wastewater produced. A business putting out a higher strength should be charged a higher base rate. Council was in consensus that a combination of volume and strength based on the nature of the user would be a logical way to set up rates. Administrator Hurlburt said that there are studies and estimates based on types of establishments and expected strength of wastewater which is used by the Met Council in the regional sewer system that will be referenced in setting up a rate structure.

The council discussed if the city should bear any costs beyond that which is allocated to the Community Center and Warming House. City Attorney Hebert noted the precedent set in the blacktopping policy. The Township/City assessed property owners 75% of the bituminous costs on non-collector roads, and 25% of the bituminous costs for collector roads.

Council noted that the city has done their part in purchasing the land for the future drainfield. Council member Swanson stated that the city made a long-term investment in the land purchase and is getting out of the practice of supplementing projects. At this point, the city should only pay their portion for the city-owned facilities and everyone else will pay their portion to keep the system running. Council was in agreement with this decision.

Administrator Hurlburt stated that this was all good information and direction to proceed ahead with preparing an ordinance and setting up a meeting with the users of the Uptown System.

RESIGNATION OF BUILDING OFFICIAL/ MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR STEVE THORP

Building Official/ Maintenance Supervisor Steve Thorp submitted his resignation on October 7, 2011. Thorp's last day of work is November 8. Administrator Hurlburt noted the immediate needs which need to be covered. The city must designate a Building Official. Hurlburt has talked with Forest Lake and Hugo staff and either city is willing to fill this need for the short-term. Forest Lake has offered a rate of \$53/hour and Hugo offered \$58/hour. Both cities would charge mileage. Council member Schneider suggested that staff contact the City of Lindstrom for an interim Building Inspector. Hurlburt relayed that Forest Lake is capable of providing personnel to handle the administering of the building code, and an agreement needs to come before the council very soon.

Simonson, seconded by Swanson, moved to direct staff to negotiate an agreement with Forest Lake to provide building inspection services. The motion carried 4-0.

Hurlburt proposed that an agreement could be reviewed by the council at their October 25, 2011 special meeting or at the November 8 meeting at the latest.

Another issue to be resolved is the appointment of a certified Class D water operator by November 1. The state requires that an operator be readily available for the city. Council member Schneider recommended a local certified operator be appointed. Attorney Hebert advised that a volunteer would not qualify according to the state health department. Hurlburt is working with a firm (Eco-Check) to contract for the operation of the water system, which would satisfy the requirements of the state health department, until permanent arrangements are in place. A contract will be forthcoming.

Council member Swanson asked that the process of hiring a Public Works Supervisor be expedited. Hurlburt noted the timeline is to have the position filled by January 1.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE WORK SESSIONS

The process of hiring a Public Works Supervisor and the attorney proposals will be discussed at a future work session.

ADJOURNMENT

Simonson, seconded by Swanson, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Eklund
Deputy Clerk