

June 11, 2013

A Work Session meeting of the City Council was held on the above date. Mayor Simonson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The following were present: Mayor Randall Simonson, Council members Dan Lee, Jim Schneider, Sally Swanson, and Chris Ness. Staff present: City Administrator Kristina Handt, Maintenance Superintendent Tim Kieffer, City Engineer Ryan Goodman and Treasurer Colleen Firkus. Mike Hinz, Asst. Fire Chief was also in attendance.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

At the suggestion of Mayor Simonson item 4.d. Goose Lake Buffer was added to the agenda. **Ness, seconded by Lee, moved to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried 5-0.**

2014-2018 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Administrator Handt reviewed the CIP Active and Pending projects for the next five years. In *Administration* staff is proposing to move forward with the electronic data storage program. This will not only help address some space issues in the City offices but also allow staff to work more efficiently when searching for documents/data. All projects related to the space needs study and possible community center/city hall expansion remain pending. Council Member Schneider requested those pending Projects 1, 3 & 5 be removed from the plan. Discussion ensued regarding the difference between Active and Pending projects. Handt agreed that there is enough working space for current staff levels, however, a separation between public and working areas is lacking. Council consensus was to keep the electronic data storage project.

At this time, there are no proposed changes to the CIP for the *Community Center* from what the Council approved last year. However, the Maintenance Supt. is obtaining quotes on fixing the roof. Staff would like to see that project completed this year given the numerous times the roof leaked during this past winter. More information will be brought to the Council when it is available. If the Council does approve fixing the roof this year then obviously changes would be made to remove that project from the CIP in 2019.

The *Parks and Recreation* Committee reviewed the CIP projects at their June meeting and suggested a few changes.

- No changes were made to Lilleskogen Park Improvements though the plan for restoring the park is unknown. There is only approximately \$8,000 remaining in the Park Capital Improvement Fund after paying for the site survey.
- Wind in the Pines was pushed back. The committee was concerned the steps would need to be replaced. Maintenance Supt. Kieffer reviewed the steps following the meeting and recommends having staff just pound down the pins.
- The committee recommended deleting the Lighted Ball Field-Infield Drainage project. The softball association no longer thinks it's a concern.
- Of the two sidewalk projects on Olinda Trail, the committee felt the one connecting the community center to the south ball fields was most important. The sidewalk from the lighted ball field to Olinda Lane was pushed back.
- Finally, the committee recommending a full reconstruction of the tennis courts in 2018 if resurfacing is completed this year.

Council Member Schneider requested the sidewalk project from 209th St. south to the ball field be removed. Pedestrian ramps were installed in the new curbs last year in anticipation of a possible sidewalk. Council consensus was the sidewalk was not necessary and people can walk on the grass strip if cars are parked on the shoulder. Mayor Simonson would like to move the project to Pending until he sees a significant use of the field. Council also agreed to move the sidewalk project to the lighted ball field moved to Pending. It was noted that both sidewalk projects are part of the City's Trail Plan. Council also agreed to the reconstruction of the tennis courts in 2018. Lilleskogen Improvements will be kept in the plan but the funding source will need to be donations or grants since there are not enough Park Capital Improvement Funds to complete the project.

Maintenance Supt. Kieffer recommended the following changes to the CIP;

- Purchase of a wood chipper for 2014. Estimated cost of a 15" chipper is \$37,500. This purchase will pay for itself in two-three years as \$30,000 has been spent for contracted tree trimming services for the past two years (2010 - \$7,650, and in 2011 - \$22,927).
- Delete PW-023 Air Compressor (\$17,000) originally planned for 2014. Instead PW-024 Utility Truck with Crane has been increased by \$10,000 for the addition of an on board air compressor, saving \$7,000.
- The John Deere tractor scheduled for replacement in 2014 and the Tiger Boom Mower attachment scheduled for 2016 were both pushed back to 2019. This would allow for the City to put all three pieces of equipment (which are used together) on the same replacement schedule. It may increase the value received for the tractor and other attachments at the time of sale if they are sold as one unit.

Council Members Lee, Swanson and Schneider said Public Works staff would need more training to become tree trimmers and they didn't feel the cost savings were accurate. Kieffer indicated the tree trimmers charge \$150-250 per hour. Schneider suggested trimmed limbs be left by the roadside and have a chipper come out a couple times a year; he suggested pushing out the wood chipper a year or two and see how much it really costs to chip. Council Member Swanson would like to see a current list of Public Works equipment and their uses.

Administrator Handt offered a suggestion for a solution to erosion problems at "dinosaur hill." Handt suggested the road could be extended straight and connected to 197th. It would be necessary to bring the road further back to cut the grade down as it is too steep. Council members Lee, Ness and Schneider said it is a lot of money to spend for service to very few people and were not interested in pursuing it.

FEES FOR FIRE CALLS

Council Member Lee requested the Council consider charging fees for fire calls. The following 22 cities of the 714 fire departments in Minnesota currently charge for fire calls: Taylors Falls, Clear Lake, New York Mills, Cottonwood, Sebeka, Spicer, Barret, Rushford, Spring Grove, Wabasso, Greenbush, Ottertail, Trimont, Princeton, Claremont, Pine River, Twin Valley, Lafayette, Ashby, Big Falls, Hewitt, and Wykoff. Assuming a flat \$500 fee for fire calls only, that could generate about \$12,000 a year. Unpaid charges can be certified to property taxes. Asst. Fire Chief Hinz expressed concern that if people are being charged, they may wait to call, trying to put out fires themselves,

leading to a worse scenario. Hinz also believes community support will drop as people will consider it double-dipping as they already pay for fire services through their property taxes. **Lee, seconded by**

Ness, moved to establish an ordinance to charge for fire calls. The motion was defeated 4 to 1 with Simonson, Ness, Swanson and Schneider voting no and Lee voting yes.

GOPHER BOUNTY

Treasurer Firkus presented the following city history regarding gopher bounty. Prior to 2008, the City paid a gopher bounty of \$2 per pair of gopher feet. In 2005 the City paid out \$1,100 in gopher bounties, \$2,423 in 2006 and \$3,914 in 2007. In September 2007 the City Council voted to discontinue the payment of gopher bounties effective January 1, 2008. It was difficult to verify that the animals were actually caught in Scandia as half of payments were going to non-Scandia residents. Council Member Ness said he thinks this a solution without a problem. Council Member Lee said it is a good job for boys, but farmers are already paying kids to hunt gophers. Council Member Swanson suggested the city make bounty hunters sign affidavits to verify the address at which the gophers were taken. Council Member Schneider doesn't think the city needs to do this. **Lee, seconded by Schneider, moved to make no changes to the current policy. The motion passed 4 to 1 with Simonson, Ness, Lee and Schneider voting yes and Swanson voting no.**

GOOSE LAKE BUFFER

Mayor Simonson led discussion as to whether or not the city should act on the Watershed's recommendation to plant a vegetative buffer on Goose Lake at the beach by the access and install an iron filter by Swenson's drainage area. The Watershed has grants to pay for it until 2015. Plantings at the beach would require the city to sign a 10-year maintenance agreement with the Watershed. Council Members Schneider and Lee like the beach would like to leave it alone. Council Members Swanson and Lee suggested planting part of the beach. Schneider and Lee questioned if doing part of it would make any impact on lake quality as there is already woods between the road and the beach filtering runoff from the road. Administrator Handt was requested to ask the Watershed to only put in the buffer near the aerator and have Watershed staff attend a future meeting to answer questions regarding the beach area.

EMPLOYEE PAY PLAN

Administrator Handt proposed a Compensation Policy and an Employee Grade and Step Pay Plan, as requested by the Council, which consists of an 11 Step system where each step is equal to approximately 2%. The Council had agreed that Columbus, Bayport, Rush City, Lindstrom, Newport and Chisago City would be used as comparable cities for the purposes of establishing the maximum market value for each job classification. Staff contacted those cities and used the information to create the proposed Appendix A to the Compensation Plan. The comparable cities had step plans that allowed for the position to reach the maximum pay rate within 8 steps, and according to the League of MN Cities research most cities set the steps at 2-5%.

Staff provided a listing of point assignments for each position based upon the State Job Match Evaluation System. After contacting the comparable cities staff learned, that they do not include the temporary, seasonal positions in their pay plans. Instead what is most common is for the Council to establish a range for all seasonal workers (Chisago City for example is \$8-12/hr, DOQ) and then

have the Council determine the amount within that range at the time of hire. Therefore the seasonal positions were removed from the job classification and point system. The maximum rate for each grade was determined by taking the average of the maximum rates in the comparable cities for

each position. Then the starting pay for each position was set at roughly 80% of the maximum rate.

The Fire Chief had requested that the Fire Dept. personnel be treated the same as other city employees in regards to wage adjustments. The proposed Step Pay Plan would not work for the Fire Dept. as to do so would reduce fire department personnel compensation by nearly 50%. Instead staff made the minimum pay rate equal to the current rate and applied a 2% increase for each step. Another pay grade may need to be added for those who are in their second year but have not attained any certifications. Council Member Schneider did not feel the volunteer Fire personnel should get a 2% increase every year like other city employees. Asst. Fire Chief Hinz indicated the Fire Chief's did not want to not ask the Council for periodic pay increases. Handt suggested the Council may want to have a separate compensation policy for the Fire Dept. Council Member Lee asked to have the proposed policy apply only to regular full-time and part-time staff and put a Fire Dept. compensation policy on another agenda.

Schneider asked why the new Office Assistant had to have her pay bumped up with this new scale. Handt indicated it was based on the State Job Match Evaluation System, and the combining of the position with the Rec Coordinator. Handt suggested the changes become effective with each employee's next anniversary date, some of which are this year. Council members were opposed to an annual 2% increase based on a good job performance evaluation. **Simonson, seconded by Lee, moved to place the Compensation Policy and Employee Grade and Step Pay Plan for approval on the next agenda. The motion was defeated with Ness, Schneider and Swanson voting no, and Simonson and Lee voting yes.** Handt asked for further direction if the Council did not like this plan. Schneider suggested a 1% step. Swanson suggested going back to a merit plan based on reviews.

EDA APPLICANT INTERVIEWS

There were three applicants for the three EDA positions: Tom Triplett, Bruce Swenson and Greg Isaacson. Interviews will be held Tuesday, June 18 starting at 6:00 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE WORK SESSIONS

The July 9, 2013 Work Session agenda will include discussion of the CIP plan and possibly a revision on the proposed City's Pay Plan.

ADJOURNMENT

Ness, seconded by Lee, moved to adjourn. The motion carried 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Firkus
Treasurer