

September 3, 2014

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, Chris Ness and Sally Swanson. Absent: Council member Jim Schneider. Staff present: City Administrator Kristina Handt, City Engineer Ryan Goodman, Public Works Director Tim Kieffer and Deputy Clerk Brenda Eklund.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

LOG HOUSE LANDING PRELIMINARY LAYOUT AND TREE INVENTORY

The Friends of the Log House Landing attended the Work Session, along with the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed Board members and Administrator Jim Shaver, Don Hansen of the St. Croix River Association, Washington County Commissioner Fran Miron and Washington County Public Works Director Don Theisen, to discuss the proposed improvements to 205th Street, the roadway to the Log House Landing on the St. Croix River. Pam Smith, spokesperson for Friends of the Log House Landing, introduced the speakers who expressed their concerns and alternative plans for the project.

Chauncey Anderson, hydrologist, addressed water quality issues and stated that sediment mitigation could be possible with minimally invasive measures.

Karen Schik, ecologist, addressed the tree impacts and stated that although 21 trees are identified to be removed, the project as proposed would impact 56 trees within the roadway due to root damage. She asked that the scale of the project be reconsidered to protect the native ecology with the least impact.

Kelli Carlson, petition and media advisor, stated that community input on social media strongly supported preservation of the rustic and rural character of the road.

Lisa Schlingerman, Scandia Parks and Trails Board member, described the Log House Landing as an historic and cultural landmark, and was concerned the proposed project would diminish the site.

Stuart Krahn, landscape architect, addressed measures in which the scale of the project could be reduced and still be eligible for grant funds.

Pam Smith presented information from her consultations with the DNR in which they could work with the City on scaling back the project and thereby reducing costs. She stated that it may be possible to make the case that Quinnell Avenue is part of the access to the St. Croix River and apply any remaining unused portion of the \$200,000 grant on repairs to Quinnell.

Shane Coen, landscape architect and planner, presented alternative plans to the road improvement project. One option would be to pave a 13' lane from Quint to the landing, with

the upper portion of the road and the landing left as a gravel surface. The other option is to retain the current width as gravel and regrade the road with a north slope. Bio-filtration ponds located at the base of the road and a concrete cable boat launch would be installed with both options. Both options also include a continuous 4' rock filled infiltration swale along the north side of the road. Parking could be made available at the landing and along 120' of the gravel lane where the road naturally widens, with additional parking proposed along Quinnell north of the intersection. Mr. Coen estimated the annual maintenance costs of the gravel option for grading and pond cleanout to be \$3,500, with an additional \$2,000 every five years for channel clean out. Mr. Coen described the gravel option as the preferred approach to have no tree removal, preserve the historic access to the river, protect the trout stream and be at a scale for appropriate use of the landing for small boats, canoes and kayaks.

Steve Bubul, municipal attorney and legal consultant, stated that the City should not have liability concerns about alterations in the DNR design standards concerning safety. He explained that the City is protected by discretionary immunity in any event due to smaller road widths.

City Engineer Ryan Goodman reviewed the concept plan that at this stage meets the grant requirements. In response to a question about removing curb and gutter from the paving option, Public Works Director Kieffer explained that having no curb and gutter will undermine the road over time, and that curbs help with off-road ruts and erosion.

Some of the Watershed Board members expressed concerns that heavy rains onto the gravel roadway may cause catch basins to become plugged which would still result in washouts of sediment into the river and erosion would still occur. The Board also questioned if the figures stated are firm calculations. Mr. Coen answered that they are only estimates at this point.

Council member Swanson stated that it may not be necessary to have the road as wide as the engineer's concept shows, but that pavement is probably the way to go as gravel could be a continuous problem to maintain. She thanked the group for the work they have done in bringing forth alternative plans.

Don Hansen, St. Croix River Association, stated the objective should be to reduce erosion and sedimentation while preserving the wild and scenic area, and reducing the road width should be examined. Mr. Hansen noted that the SCRA will soon be considering proposals for grant funding from the MPCA up to \$50,000 which mitigate sedimentation into the river.

Commissioner Miron stated that the best projects are those that the community is engaged in and encouraged the group and the City to work together on moving the project forward.

Mayor Simonson recessed the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 8:37 p.m.

2015 BUDGET

Certify Maximum Property Tax Levy Payable in 2015 (Resolution No. 09-03-14-01)

Administrator Handt presented a draft levy which was prepared with adjustments following the last budget work session. The total proposed levy amounted to \$2,227,509, a 2.6% increase over taxes payable in 2014. Handt explained that since that meeting, an increase of approximately \$11,000 to the health insurance premium for next year was received which will have implications to next year's budget.

Public Works Director Kieffer proposed a policy for On-Call Public Works employees that would compensate the employee \$250 a week to be ready to respond to callouts. This compensation would result in a yearly increase of \$13,000 to the general fund. Council member Ness stated that it is too late in the budget planning to add this cost. Council members agreed and asked staff to study what cities of comparable size do for future discussion.

The Council discussed ways to meet the increase to health insurance without raising the levy. A proposal to reduce the Capital Improvement Fund by \$20,000, re-allocate \$10,000 of that to the General Fund to cover the insurance increase, which would have a net effect of \$10,000 less to the levy, was suggested. Handt noted that this results in a total proposed levy of \$2,217,509, which is approximately a 2.1% levy increase. Ness stated he would like to see it go under 2% and closer to 0%. Handt explained that the Council can still work on the budget to decrease the levy from this proposed amount. The tax levy just may not be increased from this adopted preliminary figure.

Simonson, seconded by Lee, moved to approve Resolution No. 09-03-14-01, Certifying Maximum Property Tax Levy Payable in 2015 as amended with a total property tax levy of \$2,217, 509. The motion carried 4-0.

Set Date for Public Meeting on 2015 Budget and Tax Levy

Simonson, seconded by Ness, moved to schedule the public hearing on the 2015 budget for December 3, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. The motion carried 4-0.

DRAFT MASTER FEE SCHEDULE

Administrator Handt presented a draft Master Fee Schedule prepared by Treasurer Colleen Firkus. Handt explained that this schedule will consolidate all fees collected by the City that are now contained separately within each ordinance or policy. Many cities adopt a fee schedule each year, and it is something that the auditors routinely ask for.

Handt noted a few additional fees which the City should have in place. A non-sufficient fund check fee of \$25 is proposed, along with an annual garbage hauler license fee of \$20. This fee was established in Ordinance No. 8 but had not been collected for many years. Handt explained changes to the grading and lot line adjustment fees that would more accurately cover the City's costs for legal and engineering review. Council member Ness agreed that costs for outside review should be covered.

Public Works fees, based on a review of other communities, were added. Handt explained that in case of fund reimbursement for cleanup after a natural disaster, FEMA would need to see a fee schedule for use of equipment. Operator charges were based on current wages and benefits for public works staff.

Water rates charged to Elim and Gammelgarden had not been adjusted since the agreement went into place in 2001. An increase equal to the increase in the Consumer Price Index was proposed.

Lee, seconded by Simonson, moved to direct staff to work with the City Attorney on the proper procedure for adopting a master fee schedule. The motion carried 4-0.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Eklund
Deputy Clerk