

Fertile City Council Minutes August 10, 2015

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, August 10, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Mayor Brian Nephew and Council members Linda Widrig, Todd Wise and Dennis Hasler. Also present were Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting, City Administrator Lisa Liden, Luther Halstensgard, Reid Jensrud, and Twylla Altepeter.

Mayor Nephew called the meeting to order and there were no additions to the agenda.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave her report to the Council. She reported that the month of July had begun with 45 residents and ended with 42 and operated at 86.64% capacity for the month. They had also served 188 home delivered meals and provided two days of adult day care.

Leiting then referred the Council to an occupancy chart that she had provided showing the occupancy history from January 2013 through July of 2015. Based on the long-term low occupancy numbers, she then requested that the Council approve decertifying eight beds, bringing the home down to 42 beds. She explained that the timing for this was good since they would be able to provide more private rooms and, with the upcoming improvement project, would be able to include private bathrooms in more rooms if they were single occupancy.

When asked by Mayor Nephew how the Fair Meadow Board felt regarding this, Leiting stated that a consensus of the Board was in agreement. She also explained that she had been in touch with former Administrator Robertson to get his thoughts on the matter, that Robertson agreed that it would be a prudent move at this time with the continually falling occupancy levels.

Leiting also added that there were some State closure incentives as well as single room incentives that they could take advantage of at this time. She explained also that when occupancy rates are below 96% that the home doesn't get reimbursed for days that residents are hospitalized. Decertifying beds would bring the occupancy percentage up so that Fair Meadow would get reimbursed for those days in the future.

After further discussion of the matter, Council member Wise made the motion to decertify eight beds at Fair Meadow Nursing Home. The motion was seconded by Council member Hasler and was carried.

Kevin Nephew, Director of Public Works then gave his report to the Council. He reported that he was currently working alone since Dana Knutson had been out with heart issues and had returned to work on light duty. He reported also that Chris Awender who was working part-time mowing, had been injured in a motorcycle accident and was unable to work. He explained that while he had been able to keep up with work for the short-term that he would not be able to do any of the upcoming sewer or water projects without another able-bodied staff to assist.

After a brief discussion of the matter, Council member Hasler stated that the personnel committee would take up the matter at a meeting that would be held later in the month.

This was followed by a discussion on the easements needed for the north sewer project as well as costs and hookup fees for the project.

Nephew then reported that five building permits had been issued and that most of them were for fences and decks. One permit that had been applied for was for TDS to construct a new office building shop on the newly vacated lot located south of their current location. Nephew reported that moving the new shop to the south will make it much easier to get sewer access to the building.

Extending water service to St. Joseph's new church east of town was the next item up for discussion. Nephew explained that the church would like to have City water extended since they need reliable service with good pressure to meet the State codes in regard to sprinkler systems. He reported also that the new water line could be beneficial to the City down the road if Ron Hanson's field were ever to be developed.

After a brief discussion on the costs for the project, it was decided that a date would need to be set for the City Council to meet with representatives of St. Joseph's as well as Garfield Township Board members since the extension would be installed along a township road. Mayor Nephew stated that he would get in touch with St. Joseph's as well as the township to see if a meeting could be scheduled.

Nephew ended his report by stating that he still need to get together with Administrator Liden to review some of the budget numbers for 2016 and that we needed to start budgeting and setting aside funds for replacing the bathrooms located at JD Mason Park.

Mayor Nephew then inquired about the status of the airport drainage project. Kevin Nephew reported that there had been some wash outs in the new ditching due to torrential rain falls. He stated that he would like to hold out on repairing those areas until the rest of the ground cover in the unaffected areas had taken hold. He felt he could work with David Lehmann to reconstruct those ditch areas and then get them re-seeded.

In department reports, for the Learning Center Liden reported that Summerfest would be held from noon to 3 on Sunday, August 16th. The day would start with a free lunch at noon and the Raptor Center would be doing a presentation at 1 p.m. She also reported that Anders Macy was working on developing some mountain bike trails at the Center.

For the airport, Mayor Nephew reported that the Council would need to appoint an alternate member to the Airport Commission with the resignation of Tanner Lehmann from the Council. He also reported that they would need to set a meeting date for the Commission.

The Personnel Committee reported that they would set a meeting date for later in the month to go over compensation for 2016 as well as how to proceed with staff concerns in the Public Works Department.

The next item up on the agenda was the Treasurer's Report and Bills. Administrator Liden gave an overview of the checks for the month of July and Council member Hasler asked questions regarding higher than budgeted amounts in the categories of street light maintenance, signage and part-time employees. Liden explained that the new LED lights were unbudgeted which led to a higher than anticipated amount in the street light expense category. New street signs were also ordered to replace faded signs to be in compliance with new State retro-reflectivity standards. Finally, she explained that the part-time employee's category was for the skating rink and that last winter the weather had been favorable for the rink to be open nearly every day.

After further discussion, Council member Widrig made the motion to approve the Treasurer's Report and Bills. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The next item up for discussion was the appointment to fill the Council seat vacated by Tanner Lehmann. Council member Hasler asked how to proceed on filling the vacancy when there were two candidates interested in the position. Administrator Liden suggested that one of the Council should nominate the candidate of their choosing and then if there was a second followed by a majority vote that candidate would then be appointed to the position.

Council member Hasler then made the motion to appoint Reid Jensrud to serve on City Council to fulfill Tanner Lehmann's term. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was carried. Reid Jensrud was then sworn in and joined the Council for the remainder of the meeting.

The annual review of the rural service district was then discussed. Administrator Liden reported that this was the first year that the County had sent more definitive criteria for determining which property parcels were eligible to remain in the special taxing district. Based on these criteria, Liden had determined that 11 of the 34 parcels in the district were no longer eligible due to the fact that they had structures built on them.

After further discussion of the ramifications to the property owners of those parcels, a motion was made by Council member Wise to decertify the 11 parcels that Liden had highlighted on the parcel list that had been prepared for the meeting. The motion was seconded by Council member Widrig and was carried.

Mayor Nephew then reported on a feasibility study that Community Co-op was conducting in regard to possibly bringing natural gas to Fertile. He explained that they were bringing service to Beltrami to serve West Central Ag and that the Co-op was wondering if it would be financially feasible to continue on to Fertile. Nephew explained that he and a representative of the co-op had met with seven different high use propane consumers in town to see what their average use was and whether they would be interested in converting to natural gas if it were made available. Of those seven, all but one was very interested in converting to natural gas.

He reported further that there would be no cost to the city and that all lines would be bored in so there would be no streets or alleys dug up. Those lines would also be considered property for property tax purposes so there would also be an increase in the property tax base for the City.

A brief discussion was held on the preliminary budget particularly in regard to the capital improvement amounts for improvements to the Community Center such as windows and siding.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Brian Nephew, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator