

Fertile City Council Minutes **June 13, 2022**

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, June 13, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Todd Wise and Mary Kiefert. Also present was City Administrator Lisa Liden, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Fair Meadow Nursing Home Administrator Angie Leiting and Twylla Altepeter with the Fertile Journal. Present also were City residents Alan Johnson, Jim Peltier, Tracy Luna, Ray DeLeon, and Paul Nelson.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wilkens at 6:30 p.m. and began with those present reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Since Council member Wise was delayed at work, a quorum wasn't yet present so it was decided to proceed with hearing the monthly reports and other items that didn't require a vote.

Mayor Wilkens asked Alan Johnson, who was present to discuss potentially establishing a new subdivision in town, if he would like to come forward to discuss the matter. Johnson had brought in a hand drawn map of the subdivision that he was contemplating establishing on the south east end of Fertile. He explained that the property was a field located directly north of his property on the east edge of Fertile. The property was approximately 525 feet from east to west and 650 feet from north to south. On the map he had plotted out 13 lots with a street and a cul-de-sac.

Discussion was held on the City Code requirement for a full subdivision plan with a formal plat drawn up that would account for streets and alleys among other items. City Administrator Liden provided Johnson with the subdivision section of the City Code for his reference if he decided to move forward with his plan. Discussion was also held on where it would be best to tie in to City water and sewer. The sewer tie in would need further exploration to determine whether the elevations would work best to tie in on the north end of the property.

The location of the entry street was also discussed and whether the entry should come in from Elm Street on the west side of the property or from Ash Street to the north of the property. Johnson said that he had already contacted an engineer and was in preliminary discussions about drawing up the plat map. He ended by saying that he would plot out one or two more possible layouts for the subdivision and would work with the City on the potential layout.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave the report for Fair Meadow Nursing Home. The month of May began with 38 residents and ended with 40, operating at 92.78% capacity. They had also served 127 home delivered meals. Leiting noted that Fair Meadow's occupancy rate was better than many other nursing homes in the area. Due to staffing shortages many nursing homes were limiting or closed to admissions but that Fair Meadow was still taking in new residents.

In reviewing the profit and loss reports, Leiting reported that for the month of May there was a combined total loss of just over \$27,000 with the nursing home showing a loss of \$28,000 and the assisted living showing a profit of almost \$1,000. For the year-to-date profit and loss, the nursing home and assisted living showed a combined loss of over \$274,000 with the entire loss attributed to the nursing home and the assisted living showing a small profit. For the budget to actual comparison, income was at the target amount and expenses for the nursing home and assisted living were slightly higher than the target due to staffing costs of over \$50,000 to have travel nursing staff covering open positions.

Leiting then reported that the nursing home had been awarded a dual training grant of \$102,000 to cover college expenses for staff who wished to become LPN's or RN's. Initially 17 staff had indicated an interest in pursuing a degree but two had backed out. Discussion was held on how best to fund the expenses in the short term since tuition fees would have to be paid and then the money reimbursed to the nursing home about a month later. Council member Kiefert asked if the staff who participate in the program will be required to work at Fair

Meadow for a period of time after they get their degree. Leiting stated that they were requiring them to work at Fair Meadow for at least two years upon completion of their degree.

Under the airport discussion was held on two more obstructions that were found that would need to be cleared before the FAA could do another flight check. Kevin Nephew, Public Works Director, commented that they thought they had trimmed down all of the trees that were reported as obstructions earlier, but that it was possible they missed the one tree on the newest report since it was located on the far north end of the tree line where they had already trimmed. Nephew wasn't certain which other tree was indicated as an obstruction just east of the taxiway but said he would look into the matter and then trim both of the trees that were indicated.

Council member Wise then arrived at the meeting which made a quorum and allowed the meeting to proceed as normal. Since there were two public hearings on the agenda for 7 p.m. those were addressed first with Council member Wise making a motion to close the regular meeting and open the public hearing. Council member Kiefert seconded the motion and it was carried.

The first hearing was in regard to a rear alley setback variance to allow for Tracy Luna and Ray DeLeon to construct a fence in their back yard. Administrator Liden noted that they currently had a pool in the back yard that was located closer to the alley than the required ten-foot setback and they would like to have the pool located within the fence. Liden also noted that Kevin Nephew had checked into it and the fence would be located five feet off of the alley right of way, and that there were a few power poles along the alley that were closer to the alley right of way than five feet. Nephew felt that granting the variance would cause no issues with snow removal.

The Luna/DeLeon public hearing was closed on a motion by Council member Wise that was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to open the second public hearing for a side yard setback for Jim and Jill Peltier. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

Administrator Liden explained that Jim Peltier wanted to move in a garage in their back yard and given the location of the house and a deck on the back, that it would work best to have the garage located as close as possible to the west lot line so that they could enter the garage from the front of the property. Liden also noted that Paul Nelson, the property owner directly west of Peltier was present at the meeting. Once the location of the garage was explained to Nelson and Kevin Nephew showed him the building permit drawing, Nelson indicated that he had no issue with granting a setback variance.

The Peltier public hearing was closed on a motion by Council member Wise that was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

The regular meeting was reconvened on a motion by Council member Wise that was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

Council member Wise made a motion to approve the Luna/DeLeon rear yard setback variance based on Kevin Nephew's recommendation that it wouldn't interfere with snow removal. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve the Peltier side yard setback variance based on the approval given by the neighbor to the west. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

The meeting agenda was approved as presented on a motion by Council member Kiefert that was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The minutes of the May 10, 2022 regular meeting and May 24, 2022 and June 10, 2022 special meetings were approved on a motion by Council member Kiefert that was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

City Administrator Lisa Liden gave the Treasurer's Report. Liden went over the out of the ordinary deposits and checks for the month of May. Under the deposits Liden noted the NW Minnesota grant that had been received for \$5,000 for the Sand Hill River Golf Course. Under the check listing Liden noted the check to the Magikist for a steamer to thaw frozen water lines, the check to Polk County for property taxes, the check to the League of MN Cities Insurance Trust for workmen's comp, and the check to the golf course for the grant pass through noted on the deposits. The budget to actual reports were also briefly reviewed.

The Treasurer's Report was approved on a motion by Council member Kiefert that was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

Director of Public Works, Kevin Nephew, was next to give his report. Nephew reported that the HDPE panels that had been recommended to replace the broken dasher panels at the skating rink had not held up well over the winter. Nephew said that he still had seven of those panels left and he was hesitant to put any more up. Mayor Wilkens asked if he could check to see if they could be returned. Mayor Wilkens asked then what Kevin would recommend for replacing the broken panels. Kevin Nephew said that treated plywood would likely be the most durable since the panels at the old rink lasted for ten years or more. After further discussion it was decided that the broken panels would be replaced with painted plywood and that the replacement would take place on a section at a time around the rink. Nephew noted that they would paint the plywood in the shop prior to installation.

Mayor Wilkens then asked about the standing water in the community garden and if drainage to a storm sewer would be possible. Nephew said that he would have to look at the elevations to see where it could be drained to. Nephew also questioned the need for a permanent drainage fix since this was the first time that Nephew had ever seen that area flooded and it was due to the abnormally wet spring.

Administrator Liden gave the City Administrator report and noted that there had been continued work on the 2021 audit. Liden stated that the auditors had worked on-site for one full day and that there had been many follow-up email requests since then. Liden also reported on the mental health/suicide awareness event that she had participated in planning for. Mayor Wilkens noted that one of the items discussed at the event was community training in recognizing suicide risks and how to help individuals who may be having a mental health crisis. Wilkens said that he would like to see the training offered in Fertile. Liden reported on the car show also.

Under the Learning Center it was reported that Summerfest had been held the first weekend in June and that many people attended. Mayor Wilkens asked about possibly spraying for mosquitoes around the building and campground area at the Learning Center.

There were no reports for the fire department or the Personnel Committee.

The next item addressed under new business was the contract for the photocopier. Administrator Liden noted that the current machine that had been in the office for over five years was still working well and that there had been no changes in technology on the newer machines. Based on that, Loffler was willing to extend the current contract another three years at a lower rate and they were also going to provide a table top folding machine since office staff had indicated there was a need for one. At the end of the contract, the City would own the folding machine.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve the three-year contract with Loffler for the copy machine and paper folding machine. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

The joint powers agreement with the State of Minnesota and Resolution #6-1-22 were the next items up on the agenda. Administrator Liden explained that the agreement allowed the City Attorney to access the State data systems when he is working as the prosecuting attorney for the City for crimes committed within City limits. She noted that the same resolution and agreement were approved five years ago and this was simply a renewal.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve Resolution #6-1-22 a Resolution Approving State of Minnesota Joint Powers Agreements with the City of Fertile on Behalf of Its City Attorney. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

An extension of the Noxious Weed grant deadline was then up for discussion. Administrator Liden explained that the City had been awarded a grant for controlling buckthorn and other noxious weeds at the Learning Center and that the original grant had a deadline of June 30, 2022 to spend the funds. With the delayed spring, many entities who had received the grant had expressed concern over fulfilling the grant by the end of June so the Minnesota Department of Agriculture had approved extending the grant deadline to December 31, 2022. Council would need to approve the extension so it could be applied for.

A discussion was held on noxious weeds at the Learning Center including a patch of leafy splurge that Wayne Goeken had found in the ditch on Old Mill Road. Mayor Wilkens explained that Garfield Township would have to take care of the plants that were in the road right-of-way but that the City would have to take care of any others that were outside the right-of-way.

Council member Kiefert made the motion to approve applying for the extension on the noxious weed grant. Council member Wise seconded the motion and it was carried.

The nomination of election judges was the final item on the agenda. Administrator Liden explained that four judges plus an alternate are usually appointed for the City and also two nursing home staff for taking care of the voting at the nursing home. Liden asked for the following people to be approved as judges: Stacy Erickson, Head Judge and Valerie Leiser, Cheryll Reitmeier, Patty Benbo and Senora Pederson as Judges; Angie Leiting and Kim Carlson for nursing home judges.

Discussion was held on compensation for the judges with Liden noting that the 2020 judges were paid \$15.50 per hour which included an extra \$1 per hour for hazard pay during Covid. Given the current employment market, Liden stated that she would like the pay set at \$16 per hour for the judges and \$17.50 per hour for the Head Judge.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Kiefert, seconded by Council member Wise to approve the election judge nominations. The motion carried.

A motion was made by Council member Wise to approve paying the judges \$16 per hour with the head judge earning \$17.50 per hour. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:04 on a motion by Council member Kiefert.