

# **CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS**

## **BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA**

### **Work Session – February 8, 2016**

Pursuant to due call and notice, a work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, February 8, 2016, at 5:30 p.m. in the Conference Room of City Hall, Mayor Albrecht presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Albrecht, Meehlhause, Hellquist, Johnson, Erickson, Larson. Absent: Olson.

Staff Present: City Manager Nate Mathews, City Attorney Alan Felix, Public Works Director Craig Gray, City Clerk Kay Murphy

Others Present: Greater Bemidji – Dave Hengel;  
Red Lake Representatives – Justin Beaulieu and Harvey Roy

#### Greater Bemidji Update

Dave Hengel, Greater Bemidji Executive Director, stated that their four focus areas have not changed. He highlighted their 2015 accomplishments which included:

- Remodel of the Mayflower building. Currently, they have three major tenants leasing space in the building.
- LaunchPad has been successful and its mission is to support entrepreneurs and create a strong start-up culture. He noted that there are 20 members utilizing the co-working space.

Hengel reviewed Greater Bemidji's 2016 Work Program which included, but not limited to:

- Implementation of the collective Greater Bemidji Plan of Action;
- MI2 and expand training/skills gap work (including the high school academy concept);
- Work with City's realtor to market the City's development properties;
- Lead effort to recruit a "woody biomass" business and data center to the region;
- Work with Airport Commission in the development of general aviation industry; and
- Expand Greater Bemidji's services to entrepreneurs through LaunchPad.

#### Red Lake Promise Zones

Justin Beaulieu, Red Lake representative, reviewed the Promise Zones Initiative. Started in 2013 the plan is to work with local communities and businesses to create jobs, increase economic security, expand educational opportunities, increase access to quality, affordable housing and improve public safety by creating promise zones across the country. The first and second promise zones are complete and they are now accepting applications for a third round. The Red Lake Nation is applying for Promise Zone Designation and seeking support from the City of Bemidji.

Harvey Roy, Red Lake Chief Financial Officer, reviewed benefits of the Promise Zone which includes an opportunity to engage five AmeriCorp VISTA members.

After discussion the Council stated that they will consider the resolution of support at their next regular meeting on February 16.

#### Railroad Crossing Quiet Zones

Gray stated that over the last few months some residents have contacted Council members and inquired about the feasibility of establishing a railroad quiet zone within the City. Gray has spoken to a couple of consultants who have a good handle on the process and the cost. He stated that railroad crossings are a big liability issue for railroads and federal guidelines have strict requirements. The establishment of quiet zones is governed by the Federal Railroad Authority (FRA) and can only be requested by public authorities.

Gray stated that the process is not simple or cheap. He noted that the latest number of trains per day going through Bemidji is six. If the City wished to consider establishing a quiet zone the first step would be to hire an engineering consultant. The study will include the computation of the Quiet Zone Risk Index (QZRI) and a diagnostic team will review all crossings in the quiet zone to determine what improvements would be needed at each crossing. The study and QZRI is then submitted to the FRA. Gray stated that the

consultants he has spoken with estimated the study would cost in the range of \$20,000 and take 8-12 weeks.

Gray stated that once the study is approved each crossing must have all of the required improvements constructed. Improvements would consist of crossing arms, medians, road widening, signage, channelization, etc. The biggest cost is to install warning devices at the WWTF/Lake Irving Boat Launch where none are presently. The cost would be approximately \$200,000 and the other crossing could be as low as \$30,000 each if no road or gate work is needed.

Erickson expressed a desire to have a quiet zone study. Johnson stated that perhaps a quiet zone will spur sales of the railroad corridor and he suggested a ballot question for the voters regarding the issue or a taxing authority.

The majority of the Council was not in favor of a quiet zone study at this time.

Other Business

Mathews stated that Corey Klinefelter asked the Council to consider giving him an additional 5 feet of land along Link Street. Council consensus was they would want compensation for that additional land. Mathews will relay the Council's wishes to Mr. Klinefelter and provide an update at the next regular meeting.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Johnson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kay M. Murphy  
City Clerk