

# **CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS**

## **BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA**

### **Special Meeting/Work Session – June 22, 2015**

Pursuant to due call and notice, a special meeting/work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, June 22, 2015, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Albrecht presiding.

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

Staff Present: City Manager Nate Mathews, City Attorney Alan Felix, Finance Director Ron Eischens, Parks & Recreation Director Marcia Larson, Public Works Director Craig Gray, City Clerk Kay Murphy

Others: Sandy Nelson – Miller McDonald

#### **2014 Auditor's Report**

Eischens stated that he will be updating the Summary Financial Report for 2014 which he has prepared to inform the community of the City's financial activity in a simple, easy-to-read format which highlights the City's Audit. He stated that he has opted to not print due to the cost of printing but the report will be available on the City's website as well as sending to some of the local agencies.

Sandy Nelson, Miller McDonald, Inc., reviewed the 2014 Audit with the Council. Ms. Nelson highlighted the following items from the audit report:

- Auditors Opinion – She stated that in their opinion the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the City.
- Internal control findings 07-1 – Preparation of Financial Statements by Auditor. The City's Auditor prepares the financial statements and is noted as a significant deficiency by the management. City has noted the findings and taken it under advisement. Due to the level of knowledge required and the time necessary to prepare the financial statements, the Council does not feel it has the resources to resolve the finding at this time.
- Insufficient Pledged Collateral 13-1. The City had insufficient collateral for deposits held as of December 31, 2013 but resolved by obtaining sufficient collateral by the year ended December 31, 2014.
- Late Disbursement Payments 13-2. The City had several disbursements that were paid after 35 days and without interest during the year ended December 31, 2013. Resolution – Disbursements were paid within the 35 days required for the year ended December 31, 2014.

Ms. Nelson stated that there will be additional reporting next year as required by the State Legislature in regard to unfunded PERA. Municipalities are required to recognize their share of PERA funds. She noted that this does not change the budget just the presentation. Ms. Nelson advised the Council that if they had particular questions regarding the audit to feel free to contact her.

#### **Regional Park Designation**

Parks & Recreation Director Larson stated that she is in the process of completing an application to the Regional Parks & Trails Council to designate South Shore Park as a regional park. A requirement of submission is the City sponsoring the application submission. Application submittal is due by June 30, 2015.

**RESOLUTION NO. 5954: Supporting Regional Park Designation Application in Greater Minnesota for South Shore Park was offered by Councilmember Meehlhause, who moved its adoption, and upon due second by Councilmember Johnson was passed by unanimous vote.**

#### **Paul Bunyan Plaza Discussion**

Parks & Recreation Director Larson stated that WSB & Associates along with staff have reviewed the plans and specifications for the plaza.

Meehlhause stated he does not wish to “rehash” the reason for the design but is not in favor of utilizing property tax dollars on a re-design. He stated that those that spoke last week were passionate but he believed that they were not the majority.

Johnson commented that the Council should listen to Chamber and VisitBemidji as they deal with the tourists that the area serves.

Olson stated that he is on the board for VisitBemidji and they never authorized the Executive Director to speak on their behalf. Furthermore, the Chamber representative did not have her board’s approval either. He further stated that if the City Manager had not made the call to stop the concrete pour, we would not be here tonight talking about ripping out the concrete.

Johnson commented that the new design completely eliminates the public space. He further stated that he has received calls and visits from people in the community that perhaps did not come to the meeting but were nevertheless not in favor of the design. He stated that somewhere along the way the process failed.

**Motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Olson, to continue with original design as planned for the Paul Bunyan plaza. Motion failed with the following vote: Ayes: Olson, Meehlhause, Albrecht. Nays: Johnson, Erickson, Hellquist, Larson.**

#### Removals

Larson stated the cost to remove work that was already installed in the center landscape island along with the boulders behind Paul & Babe is \$17,500.

Council discussed removal of the boulders and asked the Public Works Director if his staff could remove the boulders. Gray advised against this as it is complicated and the contractor “legally” has the site.

**Motion by Larson, seconded by Erickson, to remove all landscaped berms and boulders in the plaza in the amount of \$17,500 placement of the boulders to be determined by staff. Motion carried with the following vote: Ayes: Hellquist, Johnson, Erickson, Larson, Albrecht. Nays: Meehlhause, Olson.**

#### Lighting

Larson stated that the original concept incorporated up-lighting for Paul & Babe within the center landscape bed. With the removal of the landscape island they proposed a 20’ pole located near the Tourist Information Center. She noted that the light pole will not block the view from the webcam and provide better lighting for the statues.

**Motion by Hellquist, seconded by Larson, approving the light fixture to provide lighting for Paul & Babe in the amount of \$1,320. Motion carried with the following vote: Ayes: Johnson, Erickson, Albrecht, Larson, Hellquist. Nays: Olson, Meehlhause.**

#### Plaza Options

Larson reviewed the following options that the Council could consider for the re-design of the plaza:

Option 1. Associated costs to add concrete paving with subsoil corrections to the center landscape island are \$19,022.

Option 2. Integral colored concrete was proposed to add a design element without impeding on the view of the statues. The cost to add integral colored concrete throughout the plaza is: \$27,360 for one color and \$56,256 for two colors.

Option 3. The estimated cost associated for upgrading the plaza area to unit concrete pavers is \$100,125. Councilor Larson commented that if the pavers are going to heave so will the concrete. Parks & Director Larson replied that they will be doing the best they can to maintain the plaza regardless of the option selected. Consensus of the Council was that this option was too expensive.

**Motion by Hellquist, seconded by Larson, approving the associated cost to add concrete paving with subsoil corrections to the center landscape island in the amount of \$19,022. Motion carried with the following vote: Ayes: Albrecht, Hellquist, Erickson, Larson, Johnson. Nays: Olson, Meehlhause.**

**Motion by Hellquist, seconded by Erickson, approving one color of integral color concrete throughout the plaza in the amount of \$27,360. Motion carried with the following vote: Ayes: Erickson, Larson, Johnson, Hellquist, Albrecht. Nays: Meehlhause, Olson.**

Landscaping Around the Statues

Council consensus was to keep concrete around the base of the statues. Council referred the choice of plantings around the TIC and grounds to the Parks & Trails Commission.

Niimi Statue Location

Larson recommended that the Council provide direction for the Parks & Trails Commission to discuss and provide direction on a location for Niimi. Determining a location would allow the concrete contractor to complete all the work while on site.

Councilor Meehlhause stated that the notion of Paul and Niimi staring each other down with some sort of tension is not true. He further stated that the City should go with the original Parks and Trails Commission recommendation.

**Motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Olson, to keep the Niimi sculpture in the location as originally designed. Motion failed with the following vote: Ayes: Meehlhause, Albrecht, Olson. Nays: Larson, Johnson, Hellquist, Erickson.**

Councilor Hellquist stated that moving the Niimi sculpture from the planned location will keep a clear view from the street of Paul & Babe. Council discussed other locations for Niimi but deferred the decision of a different location to the Parks & Trails Commission.

Councilor Larson inquired as to where the memorial park bench that was donated to the City went and the plans for replacing the Girl Scout planter. Parks & Recreation Director Larson responded that the bench is in storage and will be placed back in the park after construction is completed. Furthermore, she will be working with the local Girl Scouts on the planter.

Funding

Finance Director Eischens identified three possible funding sources for the changes to the Paul Bunyan Park project: 1) Pay for the changes to the project this year and include in next year's levy; 2) undesignated/uncommitted general fund dollars (\$161,000 currently in fund); and 3) possibly some parkland dedication fund. Eischens stated that staff is uncertain if the parkland dedication monies can be used for this particular use.

City Attorney Felix stated that the parkland dedication funds are collected by developers and according to State statute and the Joint Planning ordinance it can be used for acquisition of parkland and/or new improvements to an existing park. He further stated that to use it for this particular need may create pushback from developers.

**Motion by Hellquist, seconded by Johnson, approving the use of undesignated/uncommitted funds for all changes to the Paul Bunyan Park plaza in the amount of \$65,202. Motion carried with the following vote: Ayes: Hellquist, Johnson, Erickson, Larson, Albrecht. Nays: Olson, Meehlhause.**

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Larson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kay M. Murphy  
City Clerk