

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA
Special Meeting/Work Session – July 22, 2013

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, July 22, 2013, 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, Johnson, Hellquist, Erickson, Thompson Absent: Meehlhause

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

Others Present: Landmark Environmental - Sherry Van Duyn, Catherine Schultz

City Engineer Gray stated that on March 25, 2013, the City Council authorized staff to work with Landmark Environmental Engineering on the preparation of engineering plans and specifications for clean-up of the wood chips and creation of a swimming beach at the south shore of Lake Bemidji. The goal of the project is to create a 200' x 400' sandy swimming area in the lake along with a sandy beach adjacent to it. Gray stated that prior to the meeting he along with Landmark representatives met with a number of permitting agencies to review the cleanup. If the Council decides to proceed with the project, it is recommended that it be done in the fall of 2014 as the water depths are lowest.

Catherine Schultz, Hydrogeologist, reviewed the former uses of the property and the current conditions. She noted that there have been multiple investigations completed over the last 10 years. Two contaminated areas have been identified: 1) soil next to beach house with polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons; and 2) a sediment area with arsenic. The wood debris has very low levels of formaldehyde. She stated that wood debris ranges from the size of sawdust to planks and logs. Debris extends into the lake in the beach area to about 100 feet to 175 feet.

Sherry Van Duyn, Civil Engineer, stated that the best way to clean the area is to build a temporary cofferdam (water barrier structure) and dewater the area. After the contaminated soil is removed from the lake and along shoreline, the property will be restored. There are a number of permits that will be required including a Response Action Plan Addendum and Construction Contingency Plan to the MPCA, DNR Public Waters Works Individual Permit, Army Corps Permit, etc. Van Duyn stated that they have contacted three contractors that do this type of project to obtain project cost estimates. Using an average estimate the contractor cost is \$934,000 with a total project budget of \$1,180,000. This would be for the woodchip cleanup and beach restoration and does not include any beach or park development costs.

Mayor Albrecht stated that the City should explore or at least apply for contamination cleanup grants through the state. She further commented that she would like to talk with local legislators regarding funding to help cover the clean-up costs. She stated she was not willing to look at the \$1.2 million and think that the City should pay all of it.

Discussion continued regarding the reuse of woodchips removed. Gray stated that he did not believe the debris would be valuable enough to charge for its removal. Gray further stated that there are no guarantees that removing the woodchips will be permanent. That is why they are removing 400 feet on each side of the beach. He stated that there is no guarantee that the beach area in the water would remain clear for one year or 10 years.

Hellquist asked if a break wall could be constructed.

Van Duyn responded that the DNR would not allow one.

Parks & Recreation Director Larson stated that she will be discussing with DNR regarding a break wall north of the boat access to protect it from further undermining.

Councilor Erickson stated that at the time Nymore Beach was sold, the Council "promised" to provide another beach.

Hellquist stated that they did not know the cost of removing the woodchips at that time but they would be reneging on a promise made to the public.

Thompson stated that the beach area detracts from the value of the property.

Larson stated that the master plan for the entire south shore park with amenities is projected to cost upward of \$1.4 million and does not include the swimming beach cleanup. Renovation of the existing beach house is estimated at \$265,000. Larson indicated that there is approximately \$725,000 remaining of its half-cent sales tax that was dedicated to park redevelopment and the city also secured \$750,000 from the state in Legacy funds.

Johnson asked if it was feasible to clean up just the beach portion. Gray stated yes and it would cost \$150,000.

Council discussed whether it should seek approval from the voters for bonding to cover the south shore park project.

Mayor Albrecht asked if Tax Increment Financing (TIF) could be used to pay for bonds. Felix responded that his “gut” feeling is no but staff can research it further.

Eischens stated that a 15-year GO Bond in the range of \$4.5 million to \$5 million would be approximately 9% to 10.5% levy increase. Other bonding amounts were discussed.

The Council briefly discussed a timeline if there was to be a special election. The City Clerk indicated that the County Auditor would need to notify the Secretary of State at least 74 days before an election.

Council directed staff to provide a list of priorities for upgrades to Paul Bunyan Park, Library Park and Southshore at their August 12 work session. In addition, provide the Council with an idea of the value of the south shore land before and after improvements.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Hellquist, seconded by Olson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Kay M. Murphy
City Clerk