

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Work Session – August 12, 2013

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, August 12, 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, Meehlhause, Hellquist, Johnson, Erickson, Thompson Absent: Olson

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

Mayor Albrecht stated that the purpose of the work session was to review the 2014 budget and South Beach and Library/Paul Bunyan Park priorities.

2014 Budget

Eischens stated that since the June 10 work session the Police Department has received confirmation that the City will receive \$100,000 (\$50,000 each year) over the next two years to fund an auto theft police officer position. This increases the 2014 budget surplus from \$36,204 to \$86,204. City staff recommended the Council consider the following items be added to the 2014 budget:

- \$24,000 for additional library staff person, contingent on County support.
- \$20,000 for possible Joint Planning Office contribution increase.
- \$10,000 increase for legal consulting, if required, for services associated with City/BEDA land sales or southeast shore development issues.
- \$15,000 increase for Neilson-Reise Arena maintenance – Eischens noted that the arena's ice plant and building are over 40 years old. Increased maintenance is required to keep the facility functioning properly.
- \$6,000 for increased assessing and technology costs from Beltrami County.

Eischens noted with there is a surplus after the items listed of \$11,204.

Thompson suggested designating \$10,000 to the Friends of Lake Bemidji, who came before the Council requesting funds to ramp up inspections at boat accesses to battle aquatic invasive species.

Mayor Albrecht responded that this was not a decision the Council needed to make now.

Meehlhause commented that he had received an email regarding alleys in Bemidji needing maintenance and would like the City to consider focusing on improvements to alleys.

Gray stated that he will be doing an alley in Nymore this year using a combination of funds. In the future, he plans to pave or redo one alley per year at a cost of \$30,000 to \$35,000.

Erickson commented that she believed that the policy for improvements to alleys was through petition. Gray stated that he takes a different view of funding alleys and believed it should be funded by the overall tax base. He further commented that he will prioritize the City's alleys similar to how he does streets.

Johnson stated that the elected officials and CGMC fought hard to get LGA increased and had concerns that the budget was not showing any tax relief.

Albrecht responded that it is quite possible that the tax base has broadened and will show a decrease.

Eischens stated that at the June budget work session Councilor Olson raised the issue of pursuing a sales tax in lieu of the hospitality tax as a way of funding Sanford Center operations.

Chattin stated that there is currently no sales tax that supports operations. Consensus of the Council was they were not in favor of an increase in the City sales tax.

Eischens stated that the preliminary tax levy will be on the Council's September 3 agenda.

Park Priorities

Parks & Recreation Director Larson stated that the Parks & Trails Commission met on August 6 and prioritized amenities and a development plan for South Shore Park and Paul Bunyan Park.

Larson stated that the cost estimate for the redevelopment of Paul Bunyan and Library Parks ranges from \$2.9 to \$3.4 million. The Parks & Trails Commission and Council have designated \$744,726 for the redevelopment of these parks. After the design and survey there is approximately \$721,000 remaining in the sales tax available for final design and redevelopment. In addition, the State Legislature has allocated \$750,000 of Legacy Funds for these parks. The Parks & Trails Commission identified the following priorities based on funding available (\$1.4 million):

- Family/Group gathering area
- Third Street dock plaza
- Main Visitor Center Improvements (includes removal of 3rd Street exit)
- Chief Bemidji platform
- Parking lot
- Asphalt trail
- Irrigation (festival area)
- Turf restoration (festival area)
- Dock pads and trail connections to the dock pads

Larson stated that many other improvements have been left out and it is less than half of the original estimate for redevelopment of that area. She stated that the Commission chose what they believed were essential, visible improvements while doing some maintenance.

Don Heinonen, Parks & Trails Commission member, stated that Paul Bunyan Park is home to one of the most recognizable roadside attractions in Minnesota, if not the country, and the Commission believes it is prudent to redevelop it. He further commented that there is not much for people to do once they come and take their picture and the City really needs to put some money into this park.

Motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Johnson, to allocate the remaining sales tax funds and 2015 Legacy Funds to Paul Bunyan and Library Parks and approve the park priorities as identified by the Parks & Trails Commission. Motion carried unanimously.

South Shore Park/Beach

Larson stated the Parks & Trails Commission reviewed the Master Plan for South Shore and eliminated many of the amenities. They recommended the following be included at an estimated cost of \$726,000 to \$834,000 (does not include the Lake bed cleanup of an estimated \$1.2 million):

- Drop-off area connected to Lake Shore Drive;
- Walkways connected to parking lot and outlining the beach area;
- Paved access to the building;
- Beach;
- Small shade structure; and
- Restoration of the building to house restrooms.

She stated that the Parks & Trails Commission also recommended that a playground, shelter and splashpad be included for the park as a second phase.

Gray stated that the cost of the lake cleanup should include an additional 200 ft. to the west to keep debris from floating in. He estimated that the total cost of the lake cleanup would be \$1.5 million. He stated that staff is working on getting permits for a 2014 fall project.

Hellquist stated that the City could spend all the money cleaning up the lake and the following year the debris may be back in. He suggested one way to possibly prevent this was by building a breakwater.

Larson stated that in visiting with DNR Waters & Trails, they did not seem enthusiastic about extending the breakwater. The current plan is for a 30 foot breakwater.

A motion by Councilor Thompson to have the beach cleaned up in 2014 died for lack of a second.

Council discussion continued regarding the half cent sales tax and bringing a bonding referendum to the voters. Mayor Albrecht stated she would like feedback from the community and suggested open houses and a survey.

Gray stated that in order to do the project in the fall of 2014, a bonding referendum would have to take place before May 2014.

Meehlhause suggested that staff provide information on what the the full project would cost.

Erickson commented that she was not in favor of the “full gamut” but just the basics that would be replacing Nymore Beach and use this project as a park in progress.

Council directed staff to prepare options for a south shore beach and park from the basic amenities to the full gamut. In addition, provide the cost, bonding, levy impact and other impacts.

Pending Litigation with Bemidji Township

Motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Johnson, to close the meeting in accordance with Minnesota Statute Section 13D.05, Subd. 3(b) for the purpose of discussing with legal counsel threatened or pending litigation with Bemidji Township. Motion passed unanimously. Public hearing closed at 7:00 p.m.

Staff Present: Chattin, Felix, Gray, Eischens, Murphy
Legal Counsel: James Thomson, Kennedy & Graven (via phone)

Motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Hellquist, to reopen the meeting at 7:40 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Thompson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Kay M. Murphy
City Clerk