

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Work Session – September 14, 2020

Pursuant to due call and notice, a special meeting of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, September 14, 2020 at 5:35 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Albrecht presiding via video and telephone conference.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Albrecht, Meehlhause, Peterson, Johnson, Rivera, Erickson.

Staff Present: City Manager Nate Mathews, City Attorney Alan Felix, Assistant City Attorney Katie Nolting, City Engineer Craig Gray, Finance Director Ron Eischens, Police Chief Mike Mastin, Fire Chief David Hoefler, Parks and Recreation Director Marcia Larson, City Clerk Michelle Miller

Mayor Albrecht stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the 2021 Budget.

Amendments to Agenda

Mathews requested two items be added to the agenda:

- Consider Resolution Authorizing the City of Bemidji to enter into a Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement (POTUS Visit)
- Consider Resolution Authorizing the City of Bemidji to enter into a Fire Department Mutual Aid Agreement

Motion by Peterson, seconded by Meehlhause to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Consider Resolution Authorizing the City of Bemidji to enter into Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement (POTUS Visit)

Mathews stated that due to the visit of the President of the United States the Police Chief is requesting that the City enter into a mutual aid agreement to assist the department in regards to safety and traffic control. Mastin stated that entering into this agreement will allow the Chief of Police to request and plan for assistance. Council and staff addressed questions and concerns regarding the cost to the City with regards to this event, as well as other concerns surrounding the visit.

RESOLUTION NO. 6313: Authorizing the City of Bemidji to Enter Into a Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement was offered by Councilmember Peterson, who moved its adoption, and upon due second by Councilmember Johnson was passed by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Johnson, Albrecht, Erickson, Peterson, Meehlhause, Rivera.

Consider Resolution Authorizing the City of Bemidji to enter into a Fire Department Mutual Aid Agreement

Mathews stated that through the State of Minnesota Fire Marshal's office, the State of Oregon has requested assistance in battling the wildfires engulfing the Western states of the United States. Chief Hoefler stated that in order send firefighters to assist and give mutual aid to the State of Oregon, the City would need to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Hoefler stated that he has formed a team of firefighters to respond and he will be overseeing a task force team of Bemidji and other Minnesota fire departments in Oregon. Hoefler stated that all costs of the deployment will be reimbursed by the State of Minnesota. The team of Bemidji firefighters will be deployed for approximately two weeks and will be departing September 15 and returning October 3 or 4.

RESOLUTION NO. 6314: Authorizing the City of Bemidji to Enter Into a Fire Department Mutual Aid Agreement was offered by Councilmember Peterson, who moved its adoption, and upon due second by Councilmember Meehlhause was passed by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Erickson, Johnson, Peterson, Rivera, Albrecht, Meehlhause.

Neilson Reise Arena Discussion

Larson stated that due to COVID the Neilson Reise Arena closed in March and the ice was eventually taken out due to maintenance costs. Larson has been getting requests from user groups to reopen the rink and is seeking direction from council on that decision. Larson provided an estimate of operation costs to put the ice back in and allow user groups to begin renting ice time. Additionally, a COVID preparedness plan will need to be implemented which will affect the number of individuals will be allowed in the arena and how user groups can use the facility.

Dale Thompson of the Bemidji Community Arena and Bruce Hasbargen of youth hockey addressed council on the need for additional ice at the Neilson Reise Arena for youth hockey use, in particular for the Mites program, growth in programming and overflow games for tournaments.

Tiffany Vickaryous-Hubbard advised council that ice has been installed at the Sanford Center for BSU hockey and they have some open ice time for other user groups to use. Hubbard stated they are sensitive to the fixed rates of some of those user groups from the Neilson Reise Arena and will work to accommodate ice time at those rates. Hubbard also stated that they are able to accommodate user groups in a safe manner.

Council members Erickson and Rivera expressed concern of the general fund historically subsidizing operating and capital improvement costs of the Neilson Reise Arena and the need to find alternative funding sources. Erickson suggested user groups/ice managers form a committee to collaborate and coordinate scheduling available ice time.

Council and staff expressed questions and concerns surrounding the logistics and need in the community to reopen the Neilson Reise Arena. Rivera and Erickson stated they do not support reopening due to safety concerns and the costs associated with reopening and operating the arena. Peterson and Johnson stated they feel an obligation to the tenants and user groups to reopen the Neilson Reise Arena. Meehlhause and Albrecht support further discussion regarding the short term operation of the arena.

Motion by Erickson, seconded by Rivera that in concern for the taxpayer, concern for the COVID pandemic, concern for liability unknowns and concern for a deeper deficit for the arena, moves to keep the Neilson Reise Arena closed until the end of the year. Motion failed with the following roll call vote: Yeas: Rivera, Erickson. Nays: Peterson, Johnson, Albrecht, Meehlhause.

Motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Peterson directing the Parks & Recreation Director to prepare a COVID preparedness plan for the Neilson Reise Arena for review by the Public Affairs Committee. Motion carried with the following roll call vote: Yeas: Rivera, Peterson, Meehlhause, Albrecht, Johnson Nays: Erickson.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Peterson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk