



CITY OF FREEPORT

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July 28, 2020 – Meeting Minutes

A regular meeting of the Freeport City Council was convened at 7:00 pm by Mayor Mike Eveslage, and councilmembers Sarah Blake, Ben Ettle, Tim Hennen, and Jake Renneker.

Staff in attendance: Clerk-Treasurer Joan Wall, Public Works Director Loren Goebel, Administrative Assistant Lori Austing, City Engineer Dave Blommel, City Attorney Scott Dymoke, Fire Chief Andy Grieve.

Others in attendance:

Carol Moorman (Star Post)

Keith Fischer (109 3rd St SW)

Branden Roering (Freeport Fire Dept)

Walter Beuning (110 3rd St SW)

Approve Agenda

Ettle moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Renneker. Motion carried 5-0.

Public Forum

Walter Beuning stated he is having a hard time getting over the drive-over curb on the end of his driveway with his wheelchair and would like the City to remove the curb and create a tapered slope from the driveway to the street. Blommel explained there is about an inch and a half to a two-inch drop. Blommel stated he could stop out and take a look.

Beuning stated that there are a lot of jake brakes being used when trucks are coming into town. Eveslage wondered if we have a prohibition against engine braking in our ordinance. Dymoke doesn't think we do. Discussion was had regarding how we would enforce such an ordinance since we don't have a police force to do so. Beuning stated just putting up signs might help.

Keith Fischer stated he wants to continue the conversation about parking by Oak Station Coffee & Cone and painting by driveways. Ettle stated we did paint by the intersection, but had decided not to paint by driveways because that would open a can of worms. Eveslage agreed and said most towns who paint by driveways do it along state highways. Fischer brought pictures of people parking in front of driveways. He stated it has helped when Oak Station's employees park in front of his property, but do they have to park on the curb and grass? Eveslage stated at least he has controlled parking and let's not split hairs with how they park. Fischer doesn't think painting five feet on either side of his driveway is too much to ask for. Eveslage asked if Fischer could park his own truck in front of his property. Fischer said he could, but is the City going to cite him for parking there for more than 48 hours at a time? Fischer stated the painting the City did was very effective. Eveslage clarified that the curbs were painted because it was a public safety issue, not just because Fischer brought this to the Council's attention. The decision was made at the July meeting to paint at the intersection in hopes that would solve the public safety issue. Fischer asked why the curb wasn't painted in front of the fire hydrant and Blake had the same question. After more discussion about the

parking by Fischer's driveway, Hennen asked if we painted the curb by his driveway, would that end the discussion? Fischer said he thinks that would make it 90% better. Eveslage stated we would discuss it with Public Works at that point in the agenda.

Consent Agenda

Renneker moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Hennen. Motion carried 5-0.

Reports

Clerk-Treasurer Report

On the topic of nuisance properties, Eveslage mentioned that Avon charges administrative fees on properties until they are in compliance. Our ordinance says we can bill an administrative fee, but it isn't on our fee schedule. Several council members stated they thought it would be a good idea to charge administrative fees. Wall stated the fee schedule does have a fee of \$95 for "nuisance response". Dymoke stated that is for when the City takes action to correct a violation, not just when a letter is sent. Dymoke will look further into administrative fines. In the short term, the City could try posting the letter on their doors instead of mailing a letter.

Wall reported to Council that the League of MN Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) has agreed to add the old water tower to our insurance for the \$100,000 we asked for, but the deductible will be \$10,000, which is higher than normal. Wall asked Fritz at North Risk Partners if we could challenge this and he said they have been appealing it on our behalf, but the LMCIT underwriter will not budge. LMCIT wants to add the water tower at over \$300,000 as if it were a working water tower, which means a higher premium. Fritz doesn't think it is fair either, but there isn't much we can do.

Fire Department Report

Grieve reported that in the last month they had three medical calls and two cancelled fire calls. Grieve asked Council if we could separate the building/equipment fund into two different funds within the AFSA fund. Ertle moved to approve separating the funds with Grieve and Wall coordinating on the amounts, seconded by Renneker. Motion carried 5-0.

Grieve reported that Melrose brought over their old air tanks and packs so we are now in compliance again. We'll give them to Grey Eagle when we're done with them.

Public Works Report

Goebel reported the recirculating pump is going out at the new water tower so he will get some bids on it. Tri-State Pump will be here tomorrow to do annual inspections. We received a partial report from the Department of Health on our water audit and it looks like things are good there. Goebel is working with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) on an audit which will go on for a few weeks. Either Council or Wall will receive emails regarding that. MPCA works with Goebel, and will report to Council. So far, the MPCA is recommending that the City order an oxygen detector for the ponds next year.

Goebel reported the alley behind Hennen Flooring and right behind Craig Meyer is really sunk down. Goebel received a bid from Kotzer to cut the grass and add a couple loads of fill for \$500. Council's consensus was to have Kotzer do the work.

Goebel reported that a very large branch came off a tree by the creamery well. He has been able to find three of the property pins and has determined the tree is on the City's property. Goebel stated Tim Linn would like the whole tree taken down because he's afraid it will fall and damage their property. The base of

the tree is about six feet wide and Carr's gave an estimate to Linn of \$2,000 to take it down. Hennen asked if the tree fell, where would it land? Goebel stated it might land on Linn's garage. Council consensus is for Goebel to contact some contractors to see if they think the tree needs to come down.

Blake asked about the curb painting by Oak Station. She thought they decided to paint around the corners where the handicapped accessible ramps are located. Goebel asked for clarification from Council on where to paint. Council would like the curbs painted around the corners to the handicapped accessible ramps on both sides of Charlie's house and the corner by Oak Station.

Hennen asked what Goebel's thoughts are on painting by Fischer's driveway. Goebel asked if we could paint all the way to Fischer's driveway from the corner. Council's consensus is to paint all the way to Fischer's driveway.

Engineer Report

Blommel stated the paint and the recirculating pump on the new water tower are expected wear items that the USDA set-aside fund we have will cover. It is to our advantage to have Tri-State Coatings paint the new tower while they are in town to paint the old tower. Since they have the lift in town already the cost will be half what it would be if we had them come just to touch up the new tower. Ertle moved to approve Tri-State Coatings touch-up painting the new tower for \$7,000, seconded by Hennen. Motion carried 5-0.

Blommel met with Eveslage, Hennen, and Wall to talk about assessments for the new project. The consensus was the assessments would be pretty high if we kept the assessment policy the same. Blommel recommends looking at our policy to see about decreasing the assessment rate so it is in a more reasonable range. The assessment policy can be amended at any time without a public hearing per Dymoke. Blommel would like to get some appraisals in the project area to ensure we are doing this right. He spoke to a company that does a special assessment letter for 100 homes and assigns value to all the homes for \$2,500 instead of \$400 per house if we chose to appraise a few homes. Blommel believes this would be money well spent and this company could have it done by the August council meeting. The goal is to assess what is allowable by law and also to be fair to the homeowners. The company would send Wall an agreement to sign and they would get to work right away. Renneker moved to approve doing the special assessment letter for \$2,500, seconded by Blake. Motion carried 5-0.

Attorney Report

Dymoke had nothing to report.

Old Business

None

New Business

CARES Act Funding

Wall explained that the City can choose to administrate our own small business relief program and could choose to use the online application process Stearns County has already set up, which would make the process much easier to manage. If we do our own program, we would have control of which businesses in Freeport would receive grant funds, and the County would give us an additional 25% to give out to our businesses. If we gave our allocation to Stearns County for their small business relief program, Stearns County would decide among all applications received in the County.

Hennen asked about getting supplies for the Fire Department. Grieve stated that all the supplies they need are being given to them free of charge from the County. Eittle moved to use \$45,000 to set up our own small business relief program, seconded by Blake. Motion carried 5-0. Eittle suggested the EDA be the committee to decide which applications receive funding. Council agreed.

Review Personnel Policy

Wall pointed out the corrections to the personnel policy she made to make them match current operations, like days and hours of operation and how the work week runs. Council directed Wall to remove crossed out sections instead of leaving them in the policy with the date rescinded. Eittle asked about having a peer review aspect to performance appraisals. Dymoke pointed out page 16 of the policy states that an “objective review system will be established by the City Clerk”, so does the Clerk establish the system or the Council? After discussion, Eveslage suggested we leave it as is for now because a lot of cities do it like we do. Renneker noted that council members could contact staff when they are completing a review to find out more information.

Health Insurance on page 17 was mentioned briefly, with consensus that paying employees for health insurance instead of them being on the City’s policy would end with Wall and Goebel.

Discussion was had regarding the compensatory time portion of the personnel policy on page 14. Eveslage expressed his concern that he doesn’t want Goebel to burn out because he doesn’t take many days off. The idea of comp time is to take time off after having to work extra hours to plow snow, etc. Other council members stated that it is good for any employee to take some time off. The general consensus is to come up with a maximum that can be accrued and/or carried over. Eveslage asked Goebel to take some days off to bring the comp time balance down. Eveslage appreciates Goebel’s dedication to the City but also wants him to take care of his own health. Council would like to see examples of other cities’ comp time policies to compare.

Adjourn

At 9:15 pm Eittle moved to adjourn, seconded by Renneker. Motion carried 5-0.

Mayor, Mike Eveslage

City Clerk-Treasurer, Joan Wall