

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

City Council Meeting of October 5, 2020

Councilmembers –

Your agenda for Monday night is as follows:

NOTE: the October 5, 2020 City Council meeting will be held remotely utilizing video conferencing technology in compliance with Stay Home, Stay Safe requirements restricting public gatherings, including civic activities. However, this is still an open public meeting as defined by the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). The City will be using Microsoft Teams to livestream the council meeting. Members of the public do not need to download anything to view the proceedings. **Click on this [link](#) to join the live event (regular meeting) at 6pm Monday, October 5th – one hour later than the normal 5pm start..**

Note (2): Beginning at 5pm, prior to the regular City Council meeting, the Council will hold the first of several budget workshops. **Click on this [link](#) to join the live event (workshop) at 5pm Monday, October 5th.** These workshops are intended to provide the Council and the general public with a further understanding of the budget process in general, and to discuss elements and individual funds within the budget, prior to consideration and adoption of the budget in December.

The October 5th workshop will focus on a series of funds that have somewhat less variability than other funds such as the General Fund. The City's debt funds, custodial accounts, and special revenue funds (the 100-series of funds) will be discussed. Many of these funds reflect obligations that the City has already committed to, and/or that are reserved for specific purposes already identified in long-range plans.

Generally speaking, the Council will not be asked to commit to any final decisions on Monday, but Staff, led by Finance Director Sirke Salminen, do anticipate that the majority of these funds "are what they are," and that further budget workshops will focus on those funds that have additional variability. Director Salminen will also provide graphs, a fund "cheat sheet," and a glossary of terms that Council will be able to utilize through the rest of the budget season.

Item A, Public Comment. In compliance with Stay Home, Stay Safe restrictions, and consistent with new guidelines established for public meetings through the OPMA, in-person public comment is limited to those meetings when a public hearing is on the agenda. For those meetings, the Council Chambers will be open to the public. Those who wish to offer a comment in person will be required to wear a face mask and observe social distancing requirements. -Comments may also be submitted by emailing City Clerk Susan Duncan at susanduncan@cityofferndale.org. Comments received prior to 4:30pm Monday, October 5th will be included in the meeting record.

Item B, Consent Agenda. Including approval of September 21, 2020 Council meeting minutes, authorization of September 18, 2020 payroll, Bid Award: Pump Station 19 Decommissioning, Bid Award: Waterline Replacement Project, Approval: PRTAB Appointment.

- Bid Award, Pump Station 19 Decommissioning: The Public Works Committee has placed on the consent agenda a bid award totaling, with contingency, \$630,000 for the decommissioning of

Pump Station 19. Strider Construction Co., Inc. was the lowest bidder. The project will provide for the installation of approximately 1,400' of sanitary sewer pipe and water main from Pump Station 19 southerly to the existing sanitary sewer manhole located on Thornton Street, west of the BNSF Railroad tracks. The work will include trench excavation, sanitary sewer pipe installation, water main upgrades and new main installation, connection to existing sanitary sewer, connection to the existing water main, and decommissioning Pump Station 19 and associated appurtenances.

- Bid Award, Waterline Replacement Project: The Public Works Committee has placed on the consent agenda a bid award totaling, with contingency, \$68,148.80 for the 1474 Slater Road Waterline Replacement Project. Tiger Construction was the lowest bidder. The project is intended to address water leaks and potential areas of pending pipe failures in the vicinity of 1474 Slater Road. The City utilized the Small Works Roster to solicit bids. The expenditure was not anticipated within the 2020 budget, but the utility has adequate cash reserves to fund the project.
- Approval - Parks, Recreation, and Trails Advisory Board (PRTAB) Appointment: The Finance and Administration Committee has placed an appointment to the PRTAB on the consent agenda. Mayor Hansen has appointed Kalen Hanna to Position 6 of the PRTAB.

Item C, Private Developments Update - Vesting: Community Development Director Haylie Miller and City Attorney Dannon Traxler will provide a presentation to the City Council concerning the “vesting” of development applications. The presentation is informational, and no decisions from Council are required.

One of the centerpieces of private development regulations is an expectation for consistency in process and regulations. The public has this expectation, the private development applicant has this expectation, and the City has this expectation. “Vesting” generally refers to the process and timing through which the legal rights and rules of engagement of the parties are determined and protected during development. Broadly speaking, vesting rules and court decisions are intended to prevent any party from changing some of the rules of the game during the process. However, not all permits and regulations are subject to vesting.

The City Council is largely separated from these issues from a legal perspective, but councilmembers will often find that the public wishes for them to engage on issues related to ongoing development in some manner. The presentation is intended to clarify which permits and regulations are subject to vested rights and to provide the Council with an understanding of the concept of vesting, and to discuss how, when, and when not to engage on these topics with the general public.

Item D-I: Mayor, Council, Department, and Committee Reports.

Final Thoughts – City Facilities

Councilmembers –

We have all heard that the character of an individual or group is revealed during times of hardship. And too often we fail to acknowledge when that true character is revealed in a positive way (it is unfortunately all too easy to focus on when individuals or groups do not rise to the occasion).

After nearly seven months of uncertainty, we are confident in recognizing that both City Staff and the City Council have truly risen to the occasion.

Staff: We have discussed the fact that the City has repositioned itself from working in close proximity to one another and the public, to working remotely and with social distance. This has meant re-inventing many of our processes and procedures and finding a way to keep the functions of local government work. Beyond these quantifiable changes, we also know that we have staff (the same as in any business) who are struggling to care for children who are learning from home, supporting elderly parents, and still performing their jobs. In many cases this means starting work early, working late or on weekends, re-arranging the work schedules of a spouse, and more. The City has sought to provide technological assistance to facilitate these variabilities and has worked with individual employees to identify flexible schedules that will enable the public's work to proceed. All staff should feel proud of the work that has been completed this year. You have really stepped up to meet the occasion.

Council: As this is a message to Council, the focus of the message is really the council. At the beginning of this year, there was no way of knowing the manner in which this council would work together or work with Staff. And, while pre-COVID it did appear that there was a general desire to work together, working together in normal times is very much different from working together during a crisis, especially when there were few pre-existing relationships or connections that would have established trust. So – this council was thrown into a maelstrom, and had every potential to devolve into bickering, disagreements, lack of communication, and lack of trust.

This council has done the opposite. While you are seven individuals who come from extremely diverse backgrounds, who have different political philosophies, and who likely have different visions of the ideal functions of a municipal government – you have coalesced in a way that we believe no one could have expected. Early on, it became apparent that this Council would prioritize conversation and respectful debate. Each of you councilmembers appear to wish to genuinely understand the perspectives, and rationale, of different councilmembers and Staff. This consistent curiosity and thirst for understanding has truly been a joy for Staff to respond to.

Further, this Council has not been afraid to address wicked problems facing the City and the larger community. Traditionally, there are a few “third rails” in local government, where it becomes difficult to resolve issues because one or more people find touching (or forcing others to touch) that third rail to be so attractive. This Council appears to have so far been able to navigate many of these problems, by acknowledging that touching the third rail, when charged, is fatal – but when the charge is turned off first, the third rail is harmless. This Council has been willing and ready to engage on problems as diverse as the pandemic, the utility billing process, and social justice issues that intersect with local government.

This Council's mantra has been very much “let's find ways to make things better” – a goal that nearly everyone can support. Council has sought to be strategic in its discussions and has chosen not to focus on the tactics that would result in a pre-ordained conclusion. This has been especially evident as the Council has explored ways to confront social justice issues – issues that are weighted by their importance, legacy, and emotion.

This has had a powerful effect on Staff. It has certainly made our jobs easier, as the Council has understood that Staff is doing its best to navigate these issues as well – sometimes both personally and professionally. It has also allowed us to spend more time focusing on the issues and developing creative solutions, rather than debating basic motivations.

So, in a COVID world that has focused on the darkness – thank you Staff, and thank you Council, for being such a beacon of light.

See you Monday – Jori