

MINUTES
Eveleth City Council Workshop Meeting
9:00 a.m., January 11, 2022
Council Chambers, City Hall, Eveleth, MN

Councilor Jim Perpich, Present
Councilor John Rauzi, Present
Councilor Brian Lillis, Present
Councilor Joseph Koivunen, Present
Mayor Robert Vlasisavljevich, Present

Also present: City Clerk Administrator Jackie Monahan-Junek; Deputy City Clerk Stephanie Friebe; City Attorney Karl Sundquist (arrived at 9:12 a.m.); Public Works Director Jerry Rosati; Police Chief Jesse Linde

Mayor Vlasisavljevich called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

1. Technology & communications upgrades to water treatment plant and wastewater treatment plant

Public Works Director Jerry Rosati reported that the communications at both the water treatment and wastewater treatment plants are beginning to fail. The water treatment plant logging system is crucial to replace as soon as possible. The cost to replace the logging system is estimated around \$24,000.

Another component of the system which will need to be upgraded is the telemetry. The communication between the three buildings must be upgraded as the FCC will no longer allow communication through lines beginning this summer. The communication will need to be upgraded to computer or radio. A new system is estimated at \$75,000.

Jerry suggested a whole new system should be looked at which would allow computer programs to switch chemical feeds, determine how the pumps are running and also incorporate an automatic meter reading system. The automatic meter reads would provide a read directly to the City's computer system at City Hall. This would remove the need for the homeowner to provide the reading which would eliminate no-reads and erroneous reads being submitted. The total cost for an upgrade is estimated between \$300,000 to \$500,000.

City Clerk/Administrator Monahan-Junek suggested the City could look at a Communications and Technology Bond. Payments would be made through the utility revenue fund. The Council would like to move forward with these changes.

2. Draft wastewater treatment plant permit

Director Rosati reported that the MPCA requires renewal of the wastewater treatment plant permit every five years. The City has been working to renew its permit since 2017. The MPCA's standards for phosphates and mercury are mandatory and must be met. In order to comply, the City will need to make some changes. The MPCA is giving the City a time table in which the City must perform different pilot studies and run various models to identify a solution. Rosati will be recommending the City hire Consultant Tom Dye from MSA to set up the model templates. The City will need to budget \$50,000 per year for the pilot studies (this will also include the consultant fees). Once the solution has been found, the City can apply for grants which could potentially cover up to 80 percent of costs to implement the changes.

3. Aqueduct between Ely Lake and St. Mary's Lake

Director Rosati said there is an aqueduct between Ely Lake and St. Mary's Lake which allows water to flow between the two lakes. If one of the lakes is lower, the aqueduct can be opened to send water to the other side. St. Mary's Lake has been at a record low over this past year. The DNR found zebra mussels in Ely Lake. Although they are dormant during the winter, Rosati was told that the City cannot open the aqueduct even during the winter months without further testing of Ely Lake and St. Mary's Lake. The testing would determine whether or not the mussels have spread to St. Mary's Lake.

Mayor Vlaisavljevich suggested the City move forward with the mandatory testing as the DNR will not allow the aqueduct to be opened again without testing. Director Rosati will work to set up a meeting with the DNR to discuss the possibility of tapping into the mining pit's water supply and channeling that water into St. Mary's Lake. The DNR may be able to work with the mine to discuss the likelihood of this project.

4. Potential bonding projects

Mayor Vlaisavljevich would like to request state bonding money for renovations to the school campus. Vlaisavljevich said the Council needs to make a decision on what to do with the buildings. Would the City want to make a recreation center for part of the project? This would leave the new gym functional and with opportunity to be used. Could the Franklin School be used as office space? Discussion followed on whether or not it is feasible to reuse the buildings. What about the heating for the facility? Could the pool be saved even though the plumbing is really old? What would the cost be to the City to operate this type of facility?

5. Follow-up to Eveleth school campus tour

City Clerk Administrator Monahan-Junek suggested the Council come up with a subcommittee to include staff members and two Councilmembers. The subcommittee could meet with the architecture to understand the facility studies already completed by the school and to explore options for the site.

Discussion took place on the possibility of the City utilizing the underground fuel tank located at the bus garage. Monahan-Junek clarified that the City has right of first refusal per the contract with the school district in the event a private party comes forward with an offer on the campus.

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 a.m.