

MINUTES
Eveleth City Council Workshop Meeting
9:00 a.m., April 2, 2024
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; Public Works Director Jerry Rosati; Police Chief Jesse Linde

Mayor Vlasisavljevich called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

1. Junior Hockey Team

Dave Boitz, General Manager for the Junior Hockey Wilderness team, addressed the Council. Boitz presented the Council with a proposal for the Wilderness team to move into the Eveleth Hippodrome. The Wilderness team is a member of the North American Hockey League (NAHL) and is currently based out of Cloquet, Minnesota.

Boitz said they would be open to moving the Wilderness team to Eveleth if it can be worked out. Boitz pointed out the huge impact the Wilderness team has had on the Cloquet economy with an estimated 3.5 million dollars spent in their area. Restaurants and hotels have benefited greatly from the fan following for the Wilderness team. Although the Wilderness team has a large fan base in Cloquet, Boitz feels the Eveleth hockey heritage would be a good fit for the area. The move to Eveleth would eliminate competition for spectators with other hockey teams such as UMD.

The length of time needed for Hippodrome ice would have to be resolved. The Wilderness team would use ice from September to mid-May. Eveleth currently takes the ice out in mid-March.

Boitz said a tier 3 hockey team was also purchased and that team could also be a possibility to utilize the Hippodrome. The tier 3 team would need ice from Labor Day to mid-March.

Councilor Koivunen requested that Public Works Director Jerry Rosati gather some cost figures for extended ice at the Hippodrome.

Boitz recognized that some improvements to the Hippodrome would be necessary to host the team including a high-speed internet (to streamline live games) and a potential new

dehumidifier for extended ice. The Wilderness team would be open to see how they can participate with those upgrades.

Councilor Rauzi said the “thirst for hockey is abundant in this area.” Rauzi stated his 100 percent approval of bringing the team to town if it is possible. He said it is all about the affordability and available manpower.

The Council is in favor of working out a plan for the Wilderness to use the Hippodrome. The Council would also be in favor of the Tier 3 team using the Hippodrome. Mayor Vlaisavljevich said the City of Eveleth has historically taken care of its buildings referring to the Hippodrome as the “Heartbeat of Eveleth.” Vlaisavljevich said, “That facility was designed to play hockey. Period. Regardless of who is using it.”

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.