

MINUTES
Eveleth City Council Workshop Meeting
9:00 a.m., April 30, 2024
Council Chambers, City Hall, Eveleth, MN

Councilor Jim Perpich, Present
Councilor John Rauzi, Absent
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 9:00 a.m.

1. Junior Hockey Team

Dave Boitz, General Manager for the Junior Hockey Wilderness team, referred to the proposal the team has submitted to the City Council for utilizing the Eveleth Hippodrome. Boitz said the Hockey League is asking for a commitment from him to determine where the team will play. He said the biggest challenge would be for the beginning of the hockey season as they start in August. The Hippodrome usually does not have ice available until October. Boitz said the team could possibly make plans to play in Cloquet for a couple of weeks until the ice is available in Eveleth.

Councilor Perpich expressed his concerns and said the City is not prepared for the expenses of dehumidification and putting ice in the rink in August. Perpich also said he was expecting the Tier II team to play at the Hippodrome and not the Tier III team.

Boitz acknowledged the investment for a new dehumidifier and suggested he could try to secure naming rights for the building (if the City Council approves) in order to seek funding for or borrow the money to the City for dehumidification. Boitz proposed the league start with Tier III team as their schedule does not require as much extended ice time. There would be a possibility to move the Tier II team to the Hippodrome when the facility is ready. He also suggested the Tier III team start utilizing the Hippodrome in October for the first year until the building is ready for extended ice. They would make other arrangements for the first year for their practices which start the end of August. Boitz said that if the team plays 26 games at the Hippodrome that could add a lot to the community. He said, "We know this is a hockey town. That's why Eveleth is attractive to us."

Mayor Vlasisavljevich said he is interested in the hockey team's proposal, but there might be a transitioning time to work out the logistics. Vlasisavljevich said the City of Eveleth tried summer ice a number of years ago and it did not work.

Boitz said the league has a really good reputation for helping out. He realized the first year might be tough, but they are interested in trying to get dehumidification. He believes Eveleth will be a better market for their team than Cloquet and they would like to work towards getting their Tier II team in Eveleth. Boitz commented on the potential revenue the team could generate for Eveleth and other area businesses. He believes the team's presence would have a significant impact on the community, stating that "Eveleth would be our home."

Mayor Vlasisavljevich agreed that the games could draw people from the highway and bring action to the downtown area. He said the big concern is the age of the building. Vlasisavljevich said he would like to see that hockey continues to be played in the Hippodrome as "Hockey and Eveleth are synonymous."

Councilor Koivunen said there was a lot of good response after the newspaper article came out from the last meeting with Boitz. Koivunen said it would be a great opportunity to show case a 100-year-old building. Mayor Vlasisavljevich said the Hippodrome is a legend far beyond Eveleth. Boitz said the kids on the team recognize "how cool" it would be to play at the Hippodrome.

Boitz said he has a time crunch with the league as to making a determination on where they will play. Mayor Vlasisavljevich would like to pursue this with Boitz and said the Council will hold a workshop dedicated to this issue.

Councilor Lillis said he is entirely in favor of working with the team.

Mayor Vlasisavljevich said the Council will make a decision soon.

2. ARI report on Re-purposing of Existing schools – Commentary & Ingensa report on Evaluation of HVAC Systems at the Multi-purpose Building at the Former Eveleth High School Site

Katie Hildenbrand of Widseth reviewed the report they provided to the City in May of 2022. Mayor Vlasisavljevich asked specifically about the heating for the Gym/Multipurpose Building. In 2022, ARI estimated the cost for a stand-alone HVAC would cost around \$250,000. Hildenbrand said that amount does not upgrade or do any modifications to the existing system. The City would be basically unplugging from the High School portion of the building (to be demolished) and providing a stand-alone heating system for the gym and bus garage.

Mayor Vlasisavljevich said he would be looking to keep the building status quo to determine what type of use it is getting over the next 5 to 6 years. After that time the

City would look at upgrading or demolishing based on the use. Vlasisavljevich said that IRRRB Commissioner Ida Rukavina is very interested in keeping the gym intact for sporting events and that the IRRRB would be willing to help with repurposing the building.

Councilor Perpich said it would be a terrible waste to tear down a 25-year-old building. Perpich listed numerous potential uses for the space including City band practice area, overflow practice gym for the school, community recreational activities, etc.

Widseth will provide a new detailed report to the City to include a detached stand-alone HVAC for the gym/multipurpose building and bus garage.

3. Safety footwear policy

Monahan-Junek distributed a draft of the safety footwear policy for the Council to review. The Council will discuss this issue further a workshop meeting.

4. Update on current City buildings project

City Clerk Administrator Monahan-Junek reported on the progress to City buildings.

City Hall: Painting the Council Chambers.

Auditorium: Waiting on quotes to hang the stage curtains; waiting on quotes from a sound company to get a screen/projector and speakers.

Police Department: Reconfiguration of the interview room. Upgrade carpeting, flooring and painting.

Councilor Perpich asked when the Library steps will be repaired. Monahan-Junek said the carpeting and glue have been removed. She is waiting to hear back from the architect on the steps and she may want to add some tuck pointing to the building.

Councilor Lillis questioned the construction deadline for the Police Department to return to the main office so that the temporary portable offices can be removed.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.