

MINUTES
Eveleth City Council Workshop Meeting
3:15 p.m., October 7, 2021
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, Absent

Also present: City Clerk Administrator Jackie Monahan-Junek; Deputy City Clerk Stephanie Friebe; Police Chief Jesse Linde; City Attorney Karl Sundquist; Alan Johnson, Benchmark Engineering; Fire Chief Guy Spurlin; EMS Operations Supervisor Therese Elverum

Acting Mayor Koivunen called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m.

1. Discuss with Eveleth EMS Supervisor and Eveleth Fire Chief, City of Virginia's request for Eveleth support of their application for financial assistance with the USDA for their new regional Virginia Public Safety Center

Acting Mayor Koivunen asked the Council and staff for their thoughts on the City of Virginia's request for support of their application to the USDA for a new public safety center. Virginia is seeking support from surrounding communities for a new Public Safety Center which would house regional training opportunities.

EMS Operations Supervisor Therese Elverum informed the Council that the USDA grant program does not allow for a duplicate. Elverum wondered what would happen if Eveleth needs a new fire hall in the future. If the City of Eveleth sought a USDA grant, and supported Virginia's new Public Safety Center, Eveleth would not be able to duplicate their grant application to include a public safety training center in conjunction with a new fire hall. She said that as much as we might support the cause, it would not be beneficial to the City of Eveleth to formally endorse this project.

Fire Chief Spurlin agreed with Elverum. Spurlin said it seems like this could be a step for Virginia in the taking over the region and becoming one district.

Councilor Perpich asked if Virginia's center would be the same type of facility as Hibbing. Elverum said it was her understanding that there is a 20 mile radius requirement so it would not affect Virginia's funding opportunity.

City Clerk Administrator Monahan-Junek said that even if the City of Eveleth does not endorse the application, they would still be able to participate in training.

Councilor Rauzi said that as soon as he saw “regional” he became concerned with Virginia’s attempt to acquire the Eveleth service area. Rauzi said that Eveleth’s fire hall will not be there forever, and formally supporting this application would mean the funds will not be there for Eveleth.

Acting Mayor Koivunen said the City of Eveleth is still talking with Fayal Township to determine the future of a joint fire department. Koivunen said good luck to Virginia, but we cannot publicly support them. Eveleth may need to build in the future.

City Clerk Administrator Monahan-Junek said talks with Fayal Township regarding a joint fire department may still continue. It is not off the table even though it may stop or stall.

Therese Elverum clarified some statements made by Chief Lewis at the September 7, 2021 Eveleth City Council Meeting regarding the Virginia Ambulance responding to calls in Eveleth. Elverum noted that Chief Lewis indicated Virginia had responded to Eveleth 105 times. She confirmed that the actual number of calls was 102. There were 52 ALS (Advanced Life Support) and 50 mutual aid calls. Eveleth Ambulance has also responded to Virginia 102 times over the last year.

It is the Council’s consensus to not publicly support the new facility. This item will be on the next Council agenda.

2. Discuss request from Chas Denny to purchase city lot(s) on Grant Avenue (updated information on lot size)

City Clerk Administrator Monahan-Junek recalled the Council’s consensus at the September 13, 2021 Workshop Meeting was to sell the 70-foot property to Chas Denny in the amount of \$1,000. No formal action was taken at that meeting. Zoning Administrator Tony Jeffries had pointed out to Monahan-Junek that the lot is actually 100 feet, not 70, as originally thought. Monahan-Junek wanted to give the accurate information to the Council as Denny had indicated he would build a 40-foot garage.

In the meantime since the September 13, 2021 City Council Workshop Meeting, Chas Denny stopped by City Hall to give \$1,000 for the purchase. He was instructed that the deal was not finalized as the City Council had not yet approved a purchase agreement. Denny also started to set up forms for a garage on the site without permission from the City.

Councilor Lillis stated that Denny is trespassing on the City’s property. Monahan-Junek concurred with Lillis and indicated she had told Denny he was trespassing and to leave the property. Monahan-Junek reported that Police Chief Linde had received a call from Denny

suggesting he was planning to bring his camper back to the property (which he does not own).

Acting Mayor Koivunen said he as received a phone call and eight text messages from Denny. Denny had dirt delivered to the site. Koivunen told Denny to take the forms down for the garage. Denny was told by Koivunen that he did not have to remove the dirt at this point.

Councilor Lillis said he sounded the alarm from his perspective at the last meeting. Lillis said that no matter what the agreement says, Denny is going to put on the property whatever he chooses. Lillis said he is very leery of selling the property to Denny.

Acting Mayor Koivunen asked the Council if they would want to sell 50 feet of the property rather than the entire 100 feet to Denny. The City would own the other 50 feet.

Councilor Perpich said that Denny has no right to be on the property. Rauzi expressed his concerns over selling the property to Denny. Rauzi feared that if Denny is pulling things like this now (before he owns the property) that the City may have a loose cannon on main street.

Councilor Perpich said, “If he is trespassing on this property, what will he do with the other 50 feet?”

City Clerk Administrator Monahan-Junek will invite Chas Denny to the next Council Meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:32 p.m.