

**CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM**

Monday, August 31, 2020 at 4:30 P.M.

MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON & VIA ZOOM

ROLL CALL: Councilors Geissler, Nelson, Peterson, Mayor Boucher

ABSENT:

CITY STAFF: John Mulder, City Administrator;

OTHERS:

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. CARES Budget

John Mulder presented a proposed budget for the CARES funding related to the COVID 19 Pandemic. The City has received \$733,160. To qualify, expenses must satisfy all three elements:

1. Necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID 19.
2. Costs not accounted for in the city's budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020.
3. Performance or delivery must occur during the covered period, and payment of funds must be made during that time. For cities, the covered period is March 1, 2020 November 15, 2020.

Guidance from State of MN and the Federal Government is subject to change. City Staff has identified two priority areas: The first is dealing with the City's organizational needs: The City had had expenses and will have additional expenses for personal protection equipment, cleaning/disinfection, computer equipment to work remotely and hold remote meetings, and staff time.

The second priority area is assisting our community partners such as the Fire Department, Y @ EWC, Chamber of Commerce, and the School District. The Fire Department and Y have submitted possible requests and we are still in discussion with the Chamber and School District. The proposed budget contains some contingency in case the deadline is extended, and/or there are additional increases in the infection rates within the City.

The Council asked John to talk to the County about the responses from Hermantown business to the County's Grant program.

2. Road Improvement Process

a. 2020 Assessment Process

John Mulder reminded the Council of upcoming dates related to the assessment for the 2020 Road improvement plan. On September 8, the Council will call for a public hearing on the assessments. Over 100 notices will be mailed out. The public hearing will be October 19th. The Council was advised to hold October 26 open for possible objection hearings. Those objection hearings will be individual meetings with the Council and the objecting party. The final assessment role will be approved by the City Council on November 2.

b. 2021 Engineering

John Mulder stated the City had received 5 proposals for engineering for the Lavaque Jct Road improvement project. Including one from Northland Consulting Engineers. The Council discussed the proposals briefly, and the rationale for having a project engineer.

John also stated that staff was recommending that the City proceed with improvements on Sundby. The costs for engineering and construction for this small portion of work will be more cost effective if we include it with the rest of the road work in the area.

Staff is also recommending that the trail be excluded on the Lavaque Jct project at this time because we do not have a definitive plan to connect it to the City offices complex at this time.

3. Staffing Issues/Position Changes

John reviewed a number of staffing issues:

The workload in City Hall has not been reduced at all during the pandemic and in fact it has made more work and made it more difficult to get the work done. City staff are all feeling the extra stress, but continue to do their work.

Currently, the Utility Billing Clerk is overwhelmed, and immediate assistance is needed. There are considerably more assessment searches that need to be done, since people are buying or re-financing homes due to low interest rates. We have not been able to keep up with responding to residents about billing and assessments. We would like to develop a short-term plan to get caught up and then look at the longer term to see if that is sustainable.

The Council discussed the possibility of creating an additional position to take on various projects like the Road Improvement plan, utility management, assessment record keeping, broadband, and other various projects. With Council general approval, staff would proceed with developing the position with the hope of having someone on board in the first part of 2021. We can fund this in the proposed 2021 Budget. The exact duties, job title, and qualifications have not been finalized yet.

4. Recess: The meeting recessed at approximately 6:00 p.m.

Mayor

ATTEST:

Clerk