

Hector City Council meeting of August 10, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Present: Mayor Weikle, CM Heerdt, CM Hollan

Absent: CM Best, CM Kandt

Also present: City Admin. Aukrust, Police Chief Pierce, Fire Chief Ryan Kramer, Brad Falteysek of AEM, Jeremy Boots of Moore Engineering

Agenda

Motion made by CM Heerdt, seconded by CM Hollan and unanimously carried to approve the agenda with removal of item no. 5.02

Consent Agenda

Approve minutes of July 13, 2020 council meeting.

Approve payables and payroll.

Motion made by CM Hollan, seconded by CM Heerdt and unanimously carried, to approve the consent agenda.

Jeremy Boots of Moore Engineering

- Presented an update on the fire hall parking lot installation
- Seal coating starts tomorrow (8/4/2020) in the first section of the five-year seal coating plan. Two large patches will be done at the same time as the fire hall
- Steve Scholla submitted a signed Petition to the city to install curb and gutter and pave North Hwy 4 Drive in front of his neighbor's and his home
- A Preliminary Engineering Report (aka Feasibility Study) costs approximately \$5,000, and the survey portion costs roughly \$3,900 to determine the estimated cost of the potential project and identify the boundary areas. Boots recommends the city have a policy in place for future street improvement petition occurrences

Motion made by CM Heerdt, seconded by CM Hollan and unanimously carried, authorizes Moore Engineering to proceed with a Preliminary Engineering Report at \$5,000 and survey at \$3,900

Brad Falteysek of AEM

- Falteysek Presented the 2nd quarter financial reports. The epoxy floor at the community center was completed in December 2019 but wasn't invoiced and paid until January 2020.
- Water revenue & sewer revenues are \$42K and \$32K ahead of last year at this time
- AEM will begin work on the utility rate study next week with intentions of completion late September or early October

Mayor Weikle stated that she would like to call a special meeting shortly before the September council meeting to discuss the budget

Michael Morris of MMS Environmental to present annual review/update on water and sewer treatment systems.

- MMS provided a copy of annual water and wastewater reports

- Morris stated that these records must be kept on file indefinitely. The MN Dept. of Health reports and Fluoride sample reports must be kept on file one year, and the Consumer Confidence Reports must be kept on file in the office for three years.
**Currently, the city is unable to locate records for any of the previous year's records prior to MMS supplying them
- Water Plant – multiple complaints due to the taste and discoloration of the water
- Before MMS, Fluoride was overused. MMS took the fluoride offline, resulting in less fluoride. The current well has enough fluoride to meet the parameters of the MN Dept. of Health.
- The discoloration of the water was due to the previous operators setting of excess potassium permanganate (a form of manganese)
- MMS also discovered the aerator (first step of treatment within the water plant) was not being used. It is unknown how long it had been unused but appeared to be multiple years. The city of Hector has a Chlorine Analyzer that was not being used and was not calibrated. This has been calibrated and is now working. The Chlorine Analyzer provides an alarm in the system of too little or too much chlorine.
- Essential maintenance work – it is unknown when the last time the hydrants were thoroughly or correctly flushed, if ever? Hydrants must be flushed annually, if not bi-annually. This maintenance flushes the distribution system out of contaminants and shows if any hydrant maintenance needs to be done. Upon flushing every hydrant in Hector, we found that five hydrants did not work at all; and a couple of hydrants leak; we also found 5 or 6 valves have never been exercised – they were buried under the asphalt. The current staff had to dig them out by hand. Had maintenance been completed correctly in the past, these issues would have been found, and the fact that they weren't show that maintenance had not taken place by the former operator
- Water quality has improved dramatically, and there have been no complaints since making these changes.
- Morris received a phone call today from the MN Dept. of Health. They said that someone had reported that Morris did not submit the Consumer Confidence Report and that he missed a bacterial sample since his hiring. This report was a FALSE report, and after checking the records and files, it was confirmed the report was made on a timely basis. Additionally, Administrator Aukrust confirmed it was not only submitted and posted well in advance, it was put on the website on May 12, 2020, at 4:52 p.m., and it didn't have to be on the website until the end of July. Someone had purposely made a false report.
- Morris received a second notification from the MN Dept. of Health that someone had called in and said the city missed the bacterial sample. It was determined the bacterial sample that was missed was prior to MMS hiring – in April of 2019. Whoever the operator was at that time, missed the sample. However, it was submitted on the Consumer Confidence Report required by the MN Dept. of Health that if you miss one, you must publish it. It was published, and the city was in compliance. These accusations were unfounded and false, and this is taken very seriously by MMS and the City of Hector. Mayor Weikle stated we would look into this further, and an apology was made to Morris for having to endure these false accusations
- The water plant is running excellent – we back washed the filters sooner. We found they were back washed too long. By backwashing the filters sooner, the better the water quality there is.

It removes iron, arsenic, and contaminates and starts over fresh. We cut chemical usage dramatically. All hydrants have been flushed twice now.

- In working at the water plant, MMS has not found any fluoride reports prior to MMS starting. Annual reports and monthly reports have been provided to the city office. Maintenance and testing need to be done daily and weekly to continually provide clean water
- Admin. Aukrust stated when People Service worked in the interim prior to MMS starting; they too were alarmed that the fluoride was too high
- Recommendation: Generators need to be maintained by running monthly. Currently, the generator is brought out to the plant once a month to be run. A generator should be set up at the plant, ready to run at any given time in an emergency situation.
- The city has installed VFDs, which will protect the distribution system by starting and stopping the pumps and will prevent excessive water main breaks. Morris and Rodmyre plan to go thru the aeration system. The system is working well now.
- CM Heerdt inquired on arsenic levels. Arsenic is almost non-detectable, and there is no nitrate or Aronia. Only finding arsenic in the biosolids in the wastewater plant and is being treated.

Wastewater Plant

- 2019 Annual Report and current 2020 annual report – sample results must be kept on file indefinitely. Prior to MMS starting, the biosolids report was unfinished. MMS looked for the records and are unable to find any of the current or previous year's biosolids applications, which should be kept on file. The daily and weekly logs of the PH and DO calibrations from the wastewater plant are missing. The 2018 Crop Bio Solid Report (due December of 2019) is past due. Mike has attempted to gather the information but is unable to locate the information needed prior to his hiring. This could have been submitted at any time in 2019. MMS will not falsify information and submit reports he does not have information on. At some point, the city will have to answer to the MPCA and will likely be fined due to no records being kept by the past operator
- It has been difficult to take over due to the lack of record-keeping and lack of maintenance by the past operator. A blower had been burned out and got so hot it melted inside. The generator hadn't been run monthly, making the warranty null and void. The sludge thickener room was a disaster.
- Currently, there are four aeration basins. When MMS started, the city was using two. The other two hadn't ever been cleaned out, and there were broken pipes in them. They have all now been cleaned out, which took several weeks.
- A new permit is approaching and requires a new phosphorus limit of .67mg per liter of phosphorus effluent. Cleaned out and made repairs to two unused aeration basins and doing samples and operational changes and see if we can make the new phosphorus limit by operations. If we can't, it will require higher expenses with chemicals, buildings, permits, and engineering costs. We have had numerous meetings with the MPCA to discuss what our plan is. MMS feels these goals can be obtained just by changing the operations. This is a trial mode, and will take months to see the improvement. The permit deadline limit was one year.

- We have installed VFDs in the wastewater plant as well, which provides consistency in our calculations for phosphorus levels.
- The correct DO PH probe should be maintained and read daily. It wasn't working. We have no records of previous years that it was calibrated. The DMR's should be kept at the wastewater plant, and a copy should also be held at the city office.
- Moving forward: we have turned the blowers down, got some equipment updated at the wastewater plant, and working on the new permit.

CM Heerdt inquired how the new meat market and packing plant in Buffalo Lake coming online will affect our water and wastewater plants. Morris stated that he's been working with engineers on it and discussing it with MPCA. The meat market slaughtering will not affect the water/wastewater plants. The packing plant is another issue. The current industrial user agreement is not informative or well put together. We will require adequate pre-treatment of the water. The new permit will require additional work and conditions to be met. The concern is if they don't pre-treat their water, the city of Hector will have to treat it if they agree to take it. Other than the valve or flow meter that reads the water coming from the plant, the city has no liability with the meat plant.

Administration

- Care's Act Funds of \$80K must be used by November 2020. Funds spent must be COVID related and will be audited. City Hall is considering a police dept. computer, city office mainframe computer, supplies for the pool, wages, cleaning supplies, PPE, and items for the Fire Department, Ambulance Service, Police Department, and Public Works

Motion made by CM Hollan, seconded by CM Heerdt and unanimously carried, allocates \$1,000 of Care's Act Funds for a police department computer.

- Approximate cost of supplies due to COVID to open the pool this summer: \$1,500 plus the bill from Cintas for backpack sprayer cleaning solution
- The Primary Election is tomorrow. The office will not be open, and Administrator Aukrust and Deputy Clerk Beckler will be running the election
- The pool will remain open until August 26
- A daycare provider on the east side of town requested additional equipment be installed in a city park. The provider asked is the city would ever consider putting a park on the east side of Hector? The city had budgeted \$30K for the park this year allocated to a bathroom upgrade. Would we consider re-allocating \$30K to city park equipment or improvements?

Motion made by CM Heerdt, seconded by CM Hollan and unanimously carried, the \$30K budgeted in 2020 for bathroom upgrade in city park be re-allocated to city park equipment and improvements.

- Utility shutoffs: 1 owes from before and eight additional coming up August 18.

Public Utilities

- Morris covered Public Utilities in his report
- Approx. 90+ ambulance calls to date.

Police Chief Zach Pierce

- SRO search update: The HPD had seven applicants, and we will interview five people on Thursday, August 20, 2020

Fire Chief Ryan Kramer

- The parking lot is looking great
- AFG grant for turnout gear application was submitted in March 2020 – they are in the third round, and they keep distributing until the money is gone. No news means we are still in the running. Funds will be dispersed by the end of September
- Turnout gear purchased this year: We received three covered by an insurance claim and added 5 of our own—currently 32 active members in the Fire Dept
- Engine 2 - seals are leaking. Once they go out, we will have significant repairs on our pump. Unknown exactly how long it can run as-is. We need to consider saving funds for a replacement. The new budget asked for \$20,000, which would cover approximately 8-9 sets-increased repairs to the maintenance of building in the 2021 budget for painting
- On the parking lot project, they stopped the asphalt at Stamer road. Recommends we put loads of gravel on Stamer road to compensate for usage.

Ambulance

- Mayor Weikle proposed an expenditure limit by the Ambulance department of anything over \$400, excluding restocking of supplies, will require pre-approval by the City Administrator
- This includes the maintenance of vehicles

Motion made by CM Hollan, seconded by CM Heerdt and unanimously carried, any Ambulance expenditures exceeding \$400, not including restocking of supplies, must be pre-approved by City Administrator.

Airport

- Runway project scheduled to begin August 24 with crack sealing followed by slurry coating one week later. The painting will take place the week of September 14. The city's portion will be covered 100% by Care's Act Funds. This project should extend the life of the runway up to 5 years.
- CM Hollan reported the fly-in is a go, and a food permit will be issued. It will have take-outs and seating.

EDA

- Still working with Renville County on information, and Cares Act Funds will stay local.

Buffalo Lake Meat Plant

- A letter submitted to Jordan Zeller, of the Renville County EDA, by a new investment group, including the former owner of Triple J Farms, asked if the City of Hector would waive all past due amounts owed by Triple J Farms, the prior owner, regarding wastewater. Administrator Aukrust informed the new CEO that the city would **NOT** waive any past due amounts. As of August 1, 2020, Triple J Farms owes the city \$249,250.00

- Administrator Aukrust has informed the investment group that once the past-due bill is paid in full, the city would sit down with them to discuss coming online again. Aukrust also told them that the city would require escrow funds for legal expenses, engineering expenses, administrative expenses, five years of access fees, operator expenses, permit expenses, and agree to fund all upgrades. The city would not incur any out of pocket expenses for them to come online
- Aukrust told the CEO that the investment group would pay all costs upfront
- #1 on the letter submitted to Jordan Zeller suggested the city of Buffalo Lake freeze property taxes for five years. Buffalo Lake council took action on this by declining the suggestion.

Residents Addressing the Council

- Barbara Hoyhtya: regarding blight at the house behind her home
- Law Enforcement is addressing the property

Motion made by CM Heerdt, seconded by CM Hollan and unanimously carried, the meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Andrea Aukrust, Hector City Administrator