

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Council Work Session of the North Mankato City Council was held in the Council Chambers on July 27, 2020. Mayor Dehen called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. The following were present remotely through Zoom for roll call: Council Members Steiner, Norland, Oachs, Whitlock, and Mayor Dehen, City Administrator Harrenstein, City Attorney Kennedy, Finance Director McCann, Police Chief Gullickson, and City Clerk Van Genderen. Citizen monitoring was available through a conference call.

### **Receive Information on Executive Order 20-81 Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations**

Mayor Dehen commented that with the State Face Covering Mandate, the City does not need to review the information. It was noted the Employee Guidance on Workplace During COVID-19 was updated to reflect the face-covering mandate.

### **Discuss Kerns Bridge Solicitation Proposal**

Public Works Director Host reported the Kerns Bridge crossed the Le Seuer River on Township Road 90 between South Bend and Mankato. It was built in 1873 for \$8,652 and is the only bowstring arch bridge in Minnesota made of Wrought Iron. The bridge is currently disassembled and in storage containers at MNDOT District 7. Public Works Director Host said the staff is looking for direction on if to pursue obtaining the bridge through the solicitation process. The deadline to submit the letter of intent is August 31, 2020. The approval process is lengthy, with contract approval and construction of the bridge in 2024. Public Works Director Host reported the total contract cost, including project design, environmental/archeological study, site layout, construction inspection, relocation, and rehab of the bridge, totals \$1,800,000. Local match for the entire project would be \$360,000. He reported other options considered to include prefabricated bridges with a total cost of between \$250,000 and \$300,000. City Administrator Harrenstein confirmed that the total maximum exposure for the City is \$360,000. City Administrator Harrenstein asked Council for direction on pursuing the project and if the City should consider a different location than Benson Park. Council Member Steiner stated he was in favor of pursuing the opportunity due to the history and beauty of the bridge. Council Member Norland was in support as she loved the idea of capturing the history of the bridge, and Benson would be a great location. Council Member Steiner approved the idea of pursuing the solicitation. Council Member Oachs commented that she was in favor as it is an excellent opportunity to continue the Benson Park improvement plan. Mayor Dehen said it would be a unique opportunity to fulfill the Master Park Plan of a bridge addition. Mayor Dehen stated staff should continue with the application process, and former Council Member Freyberg could provide additional historical information on the bridge.

### **Discuss Belgrade Improvements**

City Administrator Harrenstein reported demolition on the gas station on Belgrade Avenue would begin on August 3, 2020, in preparation for work on the new Frandsen Bank. Once the demolition and work started on the site, staff would like direction on if the City should begin City improvements, including lighting, pedestrian signage, and entryway signage. City Engineer Sarff reported an updated he updated a memo first presented in October, dated October 11, 2019; the memo is included in the packet. He asked for clarification on which style of lighting the Council would like, and two options were included in the packet. A power and audio system is included in the plans to improve entertainment opportunities downtown. City Engineer Sarff reported the alley improvements would not be completed this fall but would be in the plans for the spring. He stated the American Legion granted an easement to the City to help widen the alley. Still, the Circle has not provided an

easement, and the alleyway may need to be altered to accommodate the available area. A discussion was held about burying the Xcel powerlines and the Charter lines, but it does not look like it will be feasible due to a high cost to the City and cost to property owners. Xcel will be moving the powerline at the corner of Belgrade and Range to improve visibility for the corner. Mayor Dehen asked if preparations for the midblock crossing were being made. While the crossing will not be installed this fall, it might be a good time to prepare for the installation. City Engineer Sarff reported the crossing is solar, and installation of powerlines would not be necessary. Mayor Dehen stated the Circle Inn's Belgrade access needs to be closed, like the access point by the American Legion will be closed, to assist with traffic flow on Belgrade Avenue. City Administrator Harrenstein commented that it would be an excellent time to close the accesses when work is being completed on the lighting improvement.

Public Works Director Host reviewed a few options for a new gateway sign. The signs varied from modern to traditional options. City Administrator Harrenstein requested guidance from the Council on if the sign should be changed and what type of sign the Council would prefer. Council Member Oachs reported she preferred a similar look to Commerce Drive, which would be the more contemporary look. Council Member Steiner approved of the contemporary style. Council Member Whitlock also preferred the contemporary style. Council Member Norland approved of the idea of cohesiveness in the styles. Mayor Dehen commented that he approved of the contemporary and suggested updating the sign in front of City Hall.

Mayor Dehen requested clarification from the Council on light pole choice. All members of the Council chose the traditional light poles that were also just installed on Commerce.

Council Member Norland commented that traffic at Belgrade and Range could be a bit dangerous, with some vehicles not stopping at the stop sign. A discussion was held concerning traffic violations at the corner and possible reasons for the continued disregard for the stop sign. It was decided that potential improvements to the area would be referred to as Traffic and Safety for review and discussion.

### **Discuss Request to Allow the Use of Goats for Vegetation Management**

Mayor Dehen reported he had received requests from residents who are struggling to control the invasive vegetation buckthorn. The residents would like to fence off an area and bring in goats to eat the buckthorn. Community Development Director Fischer reported the City Code regulations do not permit farm animals, including goats in the City. The use of goats to eradicate buckthorn has been used by other cities subject to specific regulations. Staff is providing information on an ordinance amendment that would allow the use of goats for prescribed grazing of noxious and invasive vegetation. The ordinance discusses properties that would be allowed to graze goats, how long goats could be used, supervision of the goats, and discusses best management practices. Also included in the packet is a grazing permit. Community Development Director Fischer requests Council guidance on bringing forward the ordinance change and a proposed fee. All Council Members and the Mayor commented that they were in favor of moving forward with an ordinance and instructed staff to review other City's fee requirements. City Administrator Harrenstein said there is a difference between the use of goats to eradicate buckthorn and just allowing farm animals in the City. He commented that the areas that could use goats would be an area that is difficult for humans to eradicate buckthorn safely. A discussion was also held concerning if the goats would actually propagate buckthorn after they eat the seeds. Community Development Director Fischer would do some research on that topic.

Council Member Whitlock thanked Bill Borchardt for his many years of service on the Traffic and Safety Committee

Public Works Director Host noted that the City's infrastructure did well and managed the 7.5 inches of rain received on Saturday night and Sunday morning. There were trees and mudslides on Judson Bottom Road, Lake Street, and McKinley Avenue. A few houses had water, but overall the City did well.

Council Member Norland moved, seconded by Council Member Oachs, to close the meeting at 1:13 p.m.

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Mayor

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City Clerk