

COUNCIL WORK SESSION SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Council Work Session of the North Mankato City Council was held in the Council Chambers on September 27, 2021. Mayor Dehen called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm. The following were present for roll call: Council Members Steiner, Norland, Oachs, Whitlock, Mayor Dehen, City Administrator Harrenstein, Finance Director McCann, Community Development Director Fischer, and City Clerk Van Genderen.

North Mankato Branding.

City Administrator Harrenstein reported City staff has been working to create a place branding campaign. He introduced Stacy Straka from PresenceMaker, who reviewed the campaign. Ms. Straka said the branding is exciting and playful and shows everyone what North Mankato brings to the region. The message works with everything from the business associations, sports and tourism, the library and swim facility, and the region's business aspect. Ms. Straka noted the branding states the slogan is "It's in our DNA Darn Nice Area." The slogan can be changed to target what the information will be used for, including "Success: It's in our DNA. Darn Nice Area." Or "Happiness: It's in our DNA. Darn Nice Area." She noted the branding would be used in the visitor guide, rack card system, banners, billboards, and social media. City Administrator Harrenstein commented a website would accompany the branding. Council Member Whitlock, Oachs, and Norland all expressed approval of the new branding and slogan. Mayor Dehen thanked the Presence Makers and the staff for their work.

Highway 14 Pedestrian Bridge Study Update.

City Administrator Harrenstein introduced Tony Rotchadl, Project Engineer from Bolton & Menk, who reviewed the Highway 14 Pedestrian Bridge Study and provided an update on the next steps.

Mr. Rotchadl reported the purpose of the study was to build on past planning efforts to identify a pedestrian bridge that spans US Highway 14 to provide safe pedestrian travel options with as little impact to Highway 14 as possible. He reviewed previous studies that included the proposed pedestrian bridge, including North Mankato's Safe Routes to School Plan (May 2015), Commerce Drive Improvement (2019), the MAPO Long Range Transportation Plan (November 2020), and the ongoing development of recreational options in North Mankato including Caswell Park Expansions, education facilities in the area, increased soccer field use, North Mankato's trail infrastructure and the continued redevelopment of Commerce Drive and South Central Campus.

Mr. Rotchadl reviewed the analysis used to identify the preferred location. Those considerations included that the bridge should not impact the future expansion of Highway 14. The bridge should minimize impacts to current or future development plans for local businesses. The bridge should leverage the existing trail and multimodal network. The bridge should prioritize proximity to recreational features. The preferred bridge corridor was identified and should be located in the vicinity of Caswell Park. Mr. Rotchadl reviewed potential bridge configurations, including an underground tunnel, a clear span bridge, and a pier-supported bridge. The underground tunnel was eliminated due to stability issues, and the pier-supported bridge was not preferred due to interference with MnDOT's ability to provide a crossover for road maintenance. The preferred bridge was a clear span bridge. Mr. Rotchadl also reviewed potential approach types, which included traditional abutment and a helical style approach. The helical style approach was more expensive, had potential maintenance issues, but provided for the smallest footprint. Mr. Rotchadl reviewed three alternatives based on the type of approach. The plans included helical, abutment approach, and a combination of helical and abutment.

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Based on the type of bridge and approach, the location of the bridge changed slightly. The cost for the helical approach bridge was \$3.9 million, the abutment approach bridge was \$3.0 million, and the combination helical and abutment bridge approach was \$3.5 million.

Mr. Rotchadl reviewed the public input process and results. He noted an open house was held, and eight people attended. Public comment was also taken online. He noted there appeared to be general support for the bridge, with residents commenting on the current intersections that they found difficult to cross. Another concern was based on funding and where the money for the bridge would come from. Mr. Rotchadl noted the goal would be to leverage local dollars and pursue dollars through grants, State funding, and Federal funding.

Mayor Dehen commented that the potential pedestrian bridge would be the lynchpin for the upper North Mankato trail system. It would be a valuable link to help move people around the City.

Receive and Discuss 2022 Utility Fund Overview-Water, Sewer, Solid Waste, Recycling, and Stormwater.

Finance Director McCann began the discussion by noting North Mankato's average monthly utility bill for 2021 is approximately \$86.36 and in the lower 1/3 for comparable cities. He said staff is proposing a rate increase of \$1.00 for all garbage carts.

Finance Director McCann reported the Water Utility Fund's operating budget for 2022 is \$2,371,234, which is an increase of \$446,977 from 2021. The increases are due to increases in capital outlay related to filter rehabs, personnel services, and transfers to the General Fund as part of the franchise fee. The Wastewater Utility Fund's 2022 operating budget is \$2,592,114, an increase of \$42,425 from 2021. The increase is attributed to transfers out to the General Fund as part of franchise fees, personnel costs, and the Mankato treatment costs. The Recycling Fund operating budget for 2022 is \$563,278, an increase of \$36,877 from 2021. The increase is related to personnel services and recycling contract fees. The Storm Water Utility Fund's operating budget for 2022 is \$508,126, increasing to \$60,623 from 2021. The increase is due to increases in capital outlay and moving the Lake St. flood station costs back to the stormwater fund. The Solid Waste Fund's 2022 budget is \$835,104, an increase of \$8,693 from 2021. The increase relates to spring and fall clean-up expenses. It is recommended to implement a \$1.00 utility fee increase on garbage carts. The Hotel Fund is related to the City's housing for temporary workers. The Hotel Fund's 2022 budget is \$155,252. The increase relates to facility maintenance and debt service due to the issuance of a bond for the hotel. Finance Director McCann reported total revenues for the fund are \$610,000 due to Hylife foods lease and lodging tax payment secured through 2023, at which time the lease will be terminated. The payments from HyLife will secure the fund through 2025.

Council Member Norland moved, seconded by Council Member Steiner, to adjourn the Council Work Session at 1:20 pm.

Mayor

City Clerk