

City of Winsted
City Council Work Session
Lewis Room
Tuesday, March 18, 2014
5:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Steve Stotko
Council Member Bonnie Quast
Council Member Tom Ollig
Council Member George Schulenberg
Council Member Max Fasching

Staff Present: Mr. Clay Wilfahrt, City Administrator
Ms. Amanda Zeidler, Utility Billing and Payroll Clerk

I. Call to Order

Mayor Stotko called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities Dues

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that in the year 2013, the City joined the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC). The Coalition is primarily a lobbyist organization seeking to advance bills that help communities in Greater Minnesota. Staff and the Mayor have utilized CGMC as a resource for both information and communication with local residents and the State Capitol. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that most recently, staff joined the CGMC at the Jobs and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee at the Minnesota State Capitol to advocate a bill that would increase the amount of money allocated to the Business Development Public Infrastructure (BDPI) grant program from \$5 million to \$25 million. It would also increase the maximum amount allocated for one project from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that the City will likely seek BDPI dollars for the development of an industrial park.

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that the CGMC also sends out legislative updates regarding bills that pertain to Greater Minnesota cities. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that staff has found the resource to be worthwhile, and the advocacy of the group does impact legislation. Given the nature of the organization, and the programsq potential impact on the City, staff believes that it is a worthwhile investment to continue to pay dues to the CGMC. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that the total cost of the dues for 2014 is \$1,091 and the money will come from the City's General Fund. He added that \$1,850 is budgeted for this item in 2014.

After a brief discussion, the City Council agreed that it is beneficial to retain membership with the CGMC, and directed Mr. Wilfahrt to submit the membership assessment to the CGMC on behalf of the City of Winsted. Mr. Wilfahrt clarified that the dues in 2014 are at twenty-five percent (25%) of the full assessment, and this fee will increase every year until the full assessment is charged in the fourth (4th) year of membership.

III. Electricity to Southview Park Field

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that the Winsted Little League Association approached the Park Commission at its March 10, 2014 meeting about making some improvements to Southview Field. In particular, the Little League Association would like to add electricity to Southview Field. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that electricity is used primarily for a pitching machine during practices and games, and currently, the Little League teams that require electricity have to run an extension cord from a nearby home. He added that the homeowner has been amenable to this arrangement so far, but this is not a sustainable model. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that in the event that the current homeowner is not home, it may not be possible for the teams to gain access to electricity. Also, in the event that the current homeowner moves, a new homeowner may not be as agreeable to such an arrangement.

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that the Little League Association received two (2) estimates for the cost of running electricity to the park. The first estimate was from Premiere Electric in Brooklyn Park which estimated the cost to be \$1,500 to \$2,000. The second estimate was from CR Electric, Incorporated in Winsted which estimated the cost to be \$1,595. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that since the range of the Premiere Electric quote is large and potentially more expensive than the quote from CR Electric, the Park Commission

recommended by a vote of three (3) to zero (0), with two (2) members absent, that the City Council proceed with the quote from CR Electric. He added that staff has been contacted by Casey's General Store of Winsted, who has indicated a desire to donate towards this project. Casey's would like to donate \$500 towards the cost of completing this project, and if approved, the donation will be accepted by the City Council at tonight's regular City Council meeting. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that with the donation, the City would spend \$1,095 on this project, and that amount would come out of the Parks Improvement Fund. The City budgeted \$6,000 for improvements in 2014, and has not utilized any of that money to date.

Council Member Schulenberg stated that the neighbor has been very gracious to allow the Winsted Little League Association to utilize the electric service. Mayor Stotko stated that the Winsted Little League Association has done a great job of utilizing the money that the City provided to fix up the parks in the past. Council Member Fasching stated that with the amount of liability that exists with running a cord to someone's house, it makes sense to install electricity at the field.

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that this item is on tonight's regular meeting agenda with a recommended motion stating that the amount of the improvement is not to exceed \$2,000.

IV. Other

a) Frozen Water Lines and Water Reimbursement

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that recently, staff has been made aware of four (4) properties in Winsted that are without running water due to frozen water pipes. At least three (3) of those properties have had someone come out to thaw the pipe with a water jetter; however, the jetter gets stuck at the curb stop at the edge of the property line. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that this would seem to indicate that the freezing is occurring in the water pipe between the property line and the water main.

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that after reviewing City of Winsted ordinance, staff did not find any language stating who owned the water pipe between the curb stop and the water main; however, the Public Works Supervisor stated that the pipes have always been the responsibility of the homeowner. Staff also looked at a recent site plan review for Casey's General Store and determined that the business owner was responsible for paying for the pipe from the City's water main to the building. Additionally, the City's sewer lines that run from the property to the sewer main are maintained by the property owner per city ordinance.

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that staff has informed property owners of methods to thaw the pipe, such as using a jetter, which often works, but once property owners cannot get past the curb stop and the water still does not work, the remaining options are to:

1. Use a welder to run electrical current to thaw the pipe. This option is not recommended by the City's insurance company because of the risk of damaging appliances and other electrical equipment.
2. Dig up the pipe and thaw it or replace it. This would cost roughly \$3,000 to \$5,000 per pipe, but it would almost certainly resolve the problem.
3. Run temporary water service from a neighbor and wait for the pipe to thaw naturally. This takes a bit of effort since the service hose may need to be brought indoors every evening depending on the temperature. It is the least expensive option, and it has worked for those who are currently using it.

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that staff has informed citizens of these options, to which several have requested that the City dig up the line from the main to the property line and replace it to restore service.

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that at this point in time, the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) has been accepting these as claims, and determining if the City has any obligation to do anything in these circumstances. Mr. Wilfahrt made a recommendation to submit each instance to insurance, as the City receives them, and have the insurance company sort out what the City's responsibility is, who owns the pipe, and who is responsible for maintaining the pipe.

The City Council discussed other options that may be available for unfreezing water lines and information for residents.

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that Staff has been asked several times whether or not the City is giving an allowance to residents that are running their water in order to avoid frozen water pipes. He stated that staff has publicized information about how to prevent frozen pipes, and staff has reviewed other communities and seen several options to consider:

1. The City does not help with this cost. Since there have been such a low number of frozen pipes, the Council could support this option. This could cause residents not to run their pipes, however, which could lead to additional frozen pipes.
2. The City could charge residents for average past use for the current month. Anything above that could be waived. This option will cost the city some lost revenue, though the amount is uncertain. This will also take a significant amount of staff time to calculate, which though it does not cost any more than what the city is paying, it will take time away from other projects.
3. The City could charge residents for average past use during the current month, and waive the next 10,000 gallons. 10,000 gallons is the estimated amount of water spent on running a tap at the recommended rate to prevent freezing. This option also costs the City revenue, and it will take staff time as well.

Mayor Stotko asked if the City could provide a policy, or ordinance to be put in place for the next time this scenario happens, so it is one piece of information and consistent for everyone. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that the City does not currently have a water policy, only a policy for high water usage. He added that reimbursement for usage to avoid frozen water lines could be part of that policy, and the ownership of the water line should be part of city ordinance.

The City Council discussed the ownership and responsibility of water lines in the City of Winsted.

Council Member Ollig stated that it is the City's responsibility to provide the utility and it is also the City's responsibility to have good customer service. Council Member Quast stated that there is a lot to be said about customer service, and what is done with the residents and businesses. Council Member Fasching stated that there may be other options, rather than digging up the street to thaw the frozen pipes, and made a suggestion to research another option. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that City staff is getting information from the LMC, and from contractors who have experience working with this in the past.

The City Council discussed options and conditions for reimbursing residents for running water to avoid frozen water lines, and going forward, it could specifically pertain to problematic areas in the City of Winsted.

The City Council directed Mr. Wilfahrt to amend the overage policy regarding water reimbursement, on a future council meeting agenda, and submit the instances of frozen water lines to the LMC.

b) C-1 Commercial District Ordinance Discussion Update

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that this item will be addressed at the next Planning Commission meeting, as well as a proposed training facility for welders and machinists in the downtown that is not currently a conforming use.

c) Industrial Park Update

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that he has received new layouts and financial information for the proposed industrial park, and he has forwarded the information to the City's financial analyst. He added that if the City can move forward, the City Council will have another meeting to discuss a potential offer on the land.

d) Chief of Police Position Update

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that the City of Winsted has named one (1) finalist for Chief of Police position and that individual will be interviewed Friday, March 21, 2014. He stated that the finalist is Justin Heldt.

e) Hotel Feasibility Study Update

Mayor Stotko asked if the information from the hotel feasibility study has been released yet. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that he has been working with the Vice President of Business Development for the Cobblestone Hotel Group and he is working on the layout of a couple different sites preliminarily. He added that the next step will be to find investors and the Cobblestone Group will help facilitate this step. The City Council asked Mr. Wilfahrt to present the feasibility findings at a future City Council work session.

f) Social Host Ordinance Update

Mr. Wilfahrt stated that he met with Justin Heldt, Temporary Acting Chief of Police and Jody Winters, City Attorney to review the proposed ordinance. The intention is to revise the proposed Social Host Ordinance and present it at a future City Council meeting.

g) Joe Johnson – Westside Skydivers

Council Member Schulenberg stated that Mr. Joe Johnson, Westside Skydivers, approached him and thanked the City Council for the contract that was approved with Westside Skydivers. He added that Mr. Johnson is still interested in purchasing a building in downtown Winsted.

h) Permanent Fence for Southview Field

Council Member Schulenberg stated that the Winsted Lions were approached about purchasing a permanent outfield fence for Southview Field. Schulenberg stated that he thought the past agreement was to use a removable fence so it can be maintained. The City Council concurred with Council Member Schulenberg. Mr. Wilfahrt stated that the Winsted Little League Association has mentioned that they are looking for a permanent fence structure at Southview Field, because it may be a prerequisite to have fencing for hosting tournaments.

V. Adjournment

Council Member Quast made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Fasching seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Steve Stotko

Steve Stotko
Mayor
City of Winsted

ATTEST:

Amanda Zeidler

Amanda Zeidler
Utility Billing & Payroll Clerk
City of Winsted