

**CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
ST. FRANCIS, MN
ANOKA COUNTY**

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION NOTES
JANUARY 25, 2021
5:30 PM**

1. Call Meeting to Order
The Work Session via Zoom was called to order at 5:35 pm by Mayor Steve Feldman.
2. Roll Call: Present were Mayor Steve Feldman, Council members Kevin Robinson, Robert Bauer and Sarah Udvig. Joe Muehlbauer excused. Also present were City Administrator Joe Kohlmann and Community Development Director Kate Thunstrom.
3. Fire Department
Kohlmann stated before you tonight is a continuation of the discussion you had at the last couple work sessions. As noted in the Work Session packet; The City signed a Fire Management Service Contract with the City of Nowthen that will result in revenue of \$75,069; \$77,322; and \$79,641 or \$232,032 over three years. The City of Nowthen will only be paying the City of St. Francis directly for Fire Management Services. With the addition of this contract it is anticipated that roughly 20 hours per week would be with Nowthen. Staff reviewed the Fire Chief's job description and assessed the additional role of the Assistant Fire Chief. With that, there is support for reassessing each position's salary. Staff's assessment, based on the city's pay guide, was that an increase in \$6,986 for the Fire Chief is supportable. Due to the increased time for the Assistant Chief, assuming paid per call is removed, an increase of about \$8,800 could be supported. These adjustments would make their salaries \$99,902 and \$17,500 respectively.

Feldman gave some verbal calculations from numbers that took from the packet to the council on his justification of why he wanted this to be revisited. Myself and Sarah (Udvig) thought they were being paid from Nowthen too. But that is not the case. That is why now I am in support of the increase of \$6,986 to the Chief and \$8,000 to the Assistant Chief and not the \$4,000 to each. He then asked each of the councilmembers their thoughts.

Bauer said at the last meeting I thought we were pretty clear. I didn't have any expectations of Nowthen paying them extra money. What are we just going to keep bringing this back up until we agree to pay them the \$6,986 and \$8,000. I thought it was very clear at the last meeting we were only going to go up \$4,000 each and that was it. I can't agree with anything more. You don't have my vote on the increase.

Robinson said it is a commodity. We are selling some labor to another city. It is going to take some extra time. It would have been better to see this information

before hand and know all the anticipated costs of doing business. I am concerned when you are saying 20 hours a week. Is it going to take away from our City. What now the chief is going to be putting in 70 hours instead of 50 hours a week and the assistant chief is going to be putting in 40 hours instead of 20 hours. I really can't go for the full amount. We don't know what the year is going to look like. We don't know what the work load entails, we can anticipate. If we are going to give more I think the chief should get more. What happens after the first year and Nowthen pulls out of the contract. Are you going to pull back the money you are giving them, that probably won't happen. I would like to hear more maybe like 75% or 60% of what is being proposed for the first year and second year we can look at it again after they give us a report of what they did or learn. It's a new adventure.

Feldman said you are putting on the focus on the chief but it involves both the chief and assistant. I think we agreed that the increase would be tied to the contract. If after the first year Nowthen pulls out so do their increases. Feldman said the contract is paying for these increases.

Robinson stated with these additional hours they said it will take are we over taxing the individuals?

Udvig said I do agree with some of the things Robinson said. But the idea of if the contract doesn't work you do take back the raise. It happens with companies, with our household, it happens. To me if it is tied to the contract, it is saying to them if we lose the contract their pay also goes back down. My concerns too is with the amount of hours they may be putting in. I guess I really don't have a problem with the increases because it is coming from the contract amount. But I want them to know if this contract doesn't work out they need to know they are going to lose the extra pay. I believe they both have the knowledge that they think this is something they can take on. But this is a contract if we or Nowthen decide it is not working its gone and so is the pay.

Feldman said again the increase is tied to the contract and we still receive the \$150,000 net that was a concern of Bauer's'. If it is affecting their jobs with St. Francis then we may back out of the contract and they go back to their previous wages. Nowthen and us both have out clauses in the contract. I believe we should pay the right wage to do this job.

Robinson said if our productivity falls in our town I don't think we should continue with the contract. Would like Kohlmann to keep an eye on it and would like a report after six months or for sure after the first year to analyze it.

Bauer said I agree with Robinson, we really don't know what this is going to look like. I don't think we should give the money up front, lets net the extra money the first year and if they are going a good job and Nowthen is happy I wouldn't mind giving them something in the second year. Right now, I just can't get on board.

Discussion continued on the topic. Kohlmann stated this will be on the February 1, 2021 City Council meeting for formal consideration.

4. Highway 47 Meeting

Feldman asked Kohlmann to put this on the agenda. Looks like there would be no way to get a fact to face meeting with MnDOT until June or July. I didn't want to waste the whole summer with not having some kind of direction from MnDOT. I guess we could agree to a Zoom meeting, we need to get on the same page. I would prefer four stops lights, are we going to get that, probably not. But willing to compromise. We need Hwy 47 to be safe and a benefit to St. Francis.

Robinson suggested Sarah (Udvig) should be part of the meeting group. Maybe even invite Superintendent Beth Giese and Bob King. Agree ask for what we really want knowing you may not get it all. I don't think you would be overwhelming them, but it's just good representation. Maybe even the Chamber of Commerce. Good representation. Feldman said Joe Kohlmann also suggesting Representative Kurt Daudt, Senator Michelle Benson and Commissioner Matt Look.

Udvig said in a perfect world it would be better face to face but I agree with the Zoom meeting. We have all been waiting long enough. I really hope our Senator and Representative can make the meeting too, I think it would be helpful. I agree we should go in with what we would want. I think Superintendent Giese would be more than willing to join. I think we should also include our police and fire chiefs. I would be willing to be a part of the group.

Feldman said before with meet with MnDOT we would have to meet as a group so we are all on the same page and go in as a unified force.

Bauer said I think it will be a stand. I would like stop lights and better turn lanes too. I agree to have police and fire at this meeting. There are multiple car accidents on this road. But I think how the lights operated makes a difference too. I would like to sit in and listen.

Feldman said we owe it to our residents. This road is important to us. We need to get this done right.

Bauer said if we do end up with four roundabouts they have to be ones that can service us as we grow. I don't see them bending and putting in lights. Feldman said at the end of the day it has to be workable for us.

Robinson said what is the possibility of litigation if we choose that route. Kohlmann said I think we looked briefly at this some time ago. I think Kate (Thunstrom) and I will put together a plan of all your suggestions tonight and we can explore the legal avenue with Scott (Lepak).

Bauer said one more thing. After all the meetings we had and then they came back and said by the way you have to pay one million dollars. It is a State Highway, I am willing to pay a little or none of it. Feldman said it ended up growing to three-five million.

Kohlmann and Thunstrom will come up with a plan and put together a group for the meeting.

5. Liquor Store Expansion

Kohlmann said I did get a late update this afternoon from Miles of Pearl Architectures with a new updated projected cost that is now \$619,000. The fiber optics was removed because we have already done that portion. The project cost was presented to the council last February.

Feldman said I don't think the fiber optics should have been included in the project cost in the first place. We currently have a cash balance of \$1,960,690 in the Liquor Fund. We have a younger age of residents. Now is the time to expand so we can buy in bulk and have a wine club. If we can get this bidding out early in the year we might get some good bids.

Robinson said he had two questions. It's been a year since we looked at this, where is the setback issue and road entrance modification. Feldman said the building was shifted to be in conformity. Thunstrom said part of that entrance was tied to Hwy 47. It all depends if that intersection is modified or not. Robinson said so did we pay to have the building redesigned? Kohlmann said yes. Robinson thought is it is not a show place destination but a good viable money making business for the city. We need to be good stewards of it. I agree with the storage is a problem. We are the only one around and should take advantage of it. Worth moving ahead.

Bauer agree it is a financially undertaking be agree it will pay for itself. Looks good. I am hoping the bidding doesn't blow up in our face.

Feldman said if we bid this out and bids comes back high we will put a timeout on it and wait. We won't spend what we don't have that's what the city has done in the past. We have the fiber optics in now and if we have to wait another year, we can.

Robinson said if the cost comes in too high maybe we do something. The cost I don't believe are going to get any cheaper in the next five years. Maybe we can do it in phases. They definitely need storage. Feldman said he agrees. We will look at it when they come in.

Udvig agreed to move forward with the addition. Even with their hours are adjusted they did well. They consistently kept up the sales during the pandemic. We have waited, now let's put it out there. If the bids come in high, we can adjust. This really does benefit our community. Let's move forward.

Council agreed to put this on the February 1, 2021 City Council meeting agenda.

6. Adjourn
Mayor Feldman adjourned the work session at 7:08 pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara I. Held". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Barbara" being more prominent than the last name "Held".

Barbara I. Held, City Clerk