

Jackson, Minnesota
January 6, 2015

The Jackson City Council met in regular session in the City Council Chambers of City Hall at 6:30 P.M. on Tuesday, January 6, 2015 with the meeting called to order by Mayor Wayne Walter. On the roll call, the following persons were present: Mayor Wayne Walter, Aldermen Bern, Handevidt, Finck, Temple and Cushman, City Administrator Jennifer Bromeland, City Attorney Steve Handevidt and Council Secretary/City Clerk Dave Maschoff. Also present were Jackson Economic Development Coordinator Sue Pirsig, Greg Mitchell with Bolton and Menk, Chris Bower and Scott Thompson from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Jackson County Commissioners Bill Tusa and Kim Hummel, Pastor Lance Isaacson of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Jackson, Michelle Bratrud, Rich Koch, Steve Eral, Susan Reiter, Larry Hanson, Mary Gilmore, Barb Bern, Dave Schmidt of KKOJ/KRAQ Radio and Marie Zimmerman of the Jackson County Pilot. (A quorum of the City Council was present.) (Alderman Donnie Schoenrock was absent.)

OATH OF OFFICE FOR MAYOR WAYNE WALTER AND ALDERMEN DAVE CUSHMAN, KEN TEMPLE, BRANDON FINCK AND MIKE HANDEVIDT

City Administrator Jennifer Bromeland administered the Oath of Office to Wayne Walter as Mayor for a term commencing in 2015.

Mayor Wayne Walter then administered the Oath of Office to Mike Handevidt and Brandon Finck as First Ward Aldermen and Ken Temple and Dave Cushman as Second Ward Aldermen for terms also commencing in 2015. (Oaths of Office attached)

CHRIS BOWER, PROJECT MANAGER WITH MnDOT: TH 71 BRIDGE PROJECT UPDATE

Bower informed the Council that he wanted to provide more regular updates about the upcoming Highway 71 project. He said he spoke with City Administrator Bromeland about meeting with her every other week to provide updates as construction draws near.

Bower said in regard to the construction schedule, the current bridge on Highway 71 over the Des Moines River will be replaced in 2015. He said there is also the potential of constructing a roundabout at the intersection of Industrial Parkway and Highway 71. However, Bower said MnDOT doesn't have the ability to prepare the plans for the roundabout in the same time frame as the plans for the bridge. He said that means the earliest the roundabout could be constructed would be in 2016 creating the potential of having road closures and detours in 2015 and 2016. Bower pointed out that would be two years of closure and additional "hurt" on the businesses. He said MnDOT wanted to determine if there was a way to reduce the duration of the closures and detours.

Bower noted one possible option would be that MnDOT could award the bridge project in 2015 and complete some minor work under traffic, but hold off on the actual bridge replacement until 2016. He said the bridge replacement could be completed at the same time as the roundabout. Bower went on to say that in doing so, MnDOT incurs a little extra expense, but feels it's worth it in trying to keep the detour down to a single year. However, Bower said that will only occur if plans move forward for a roundabout in 2016. He said if the City doesn't want to install a roundabout, then MnDOT would rather do the bridge work in 2015 and there would be only one year of a detour.

Bower said MnDOT wants to know if the City Council wants to move ahead with installing a roundabout. If that's the case, then MnDOT needs to get started with designing the roundabout in order to be ready for the bridge and roundabout construction all in 2016. If the City Council would approve installing a roundabout, Bower said MnDOT would then hold off on the bridge replacement in 2015 and complete it all in 2016.

In addition to the schedule for the bridge replacement, Bower said MnDOT also wanted to ask the Council's thoughts regarding the roundabout. Bower said prior to the Council meeting, MnDOT met with local businesses to answer questions about the proposed plans for the bridge replacement and roundabout.

Bern asked if the cost has changed for the installation of the roundabout.

Bower responded that the cost would be less than the original TED proposal that included installing a second interchange on the Interstate. He said the cost would be less for both the City and State's share.

Bern asked if Jackson County would participate in the cost.

Bower said the County would share in the cost just as they would have in the proposed second interchange.

Cushman said a couple summers ago at a meeting in Mankato, both a roundabout and traffic light were discussed for the intersection, but now nothing has been mentioned about a traffic light other than it has become more expensive.

Bower explained as part of the traffic study that looked at alternatives, a roundabout and traffic signal were roughly the same in cost. He said explained the pavement at the intersection of Highway 71 and Industrial Road is worn out. Bower said if new turn lanes want to be installed to facilitate additional development in that area, the roadway has to be reconstructed. He said once you begin reconstructing a roadway, the cost difference between a traffic signal and a roundabout is not that much different because it's all new pavement whether in a circle or straight lines. Bower explained the reason MnDOT is proposing a roundabout at that location is because a roundabout will have less delay than a signal. He elaborated that a traffic study found with future 20 to 35 year projected traffic volumes, a roundabout would have two minutes less delay during the peak hour than a traffic signal. Bower said everyone travelling through that intersection in a peak hour will save two minutes on average with the projected future traffic volume. He said the other reason MnDOT would like to install a roundabout are the safety benefits. Bower went on to say roundabouts, on average, have a reduction of serious injuries crashes of about 85% when compared to a four leg traditional intersection. He reiterated that a roundabout will cost roughly the same as a traffic signal, it's going to be safer and have fewer delays. As far as MnDOT is concerned, Bower said a roundabout is really the only good solution for that intersection. He said it's the way to move forward if improvements are going to be made to the intersection.

Temple noted one of his concerns was large vehicles being able to use the roundabout, but said Bower demonstrated that a large vehicle can negotiate through a roundabout.

Bower noted MnDOT has a lot of experience accommodating large vehicles through roundabouts. He said Highway 71 is actually a State oversize, overweight route so this is one of the routes in Minnesota where MnDOT wants oversize vehicles to travel.

Bower explained that MnDOT can design the roundabout so any size vehicle can travel through it. He said obviously if something is going to be built to facilitate industrial development, a key component will be to design the roundabout to accommodate large vehicles like trucks. Bower said MnDOT would not be proposing a roundabout for that intersection if they were not confident they could get trucks through the roundabout to accommodate industrial development.

Finck asked if the roundabout was the only option, or if traffic lights were an option and would qualify for the TED grant cost share.

Bower said as far as MnDOT is concerned, they cannot support an option that's going to lead to more crashes. He said MnDOT cannot support an option that would increase fatal and serious injury crashes which they would be doing if they installed traffic signals at that location.

Responding to a question from Temple, Bower said there's not a substantial cost difference between installing a roundabout or traffic signals.

Bern noted if the goal from the beginning has been to keep traffic flowing and trucks moving through Highway 71 through Jackson and onto the Interstate, he would support moving forward with the installation of a roundabout. He said the whole purpose of the traffic study was to keep traffic flowing from the Industrial Park and down Highway 71.

Bower said when the traffic numbers and future traffic volumes were calculated in the traffic study model based on future development of the area, the "level service" for a roundabout was either a "B" or "C" in a peak morning or afternoon traffic hour and for a traffic signal it was "level service F", which is the worst it gets. Bower said for a two way stop control situation, it's so bad the traffic model breaks down and could not provide a level of service. He said there would be well over a three minute delay on each leg of traffic with a two-way stop control. Bower said if the industrial area is developed and the future traffic needs for the next 20 years are considered, doing nothing at the intersection of Highway 71 and Industrial Parkway is going to lead to severe congestion and additional crash risks as well. Bower said the traffic study is indicating that a roundabout is the only way to get good operation and an improvement in safety at the intersection. He said a traffic signal would be "level service "F", creating, on average, about three minutes in delay during peak traffic hours on each traffic leg. Bower added it would lead to an increase in serious and fatal injury crashes compared to a roundabout.

Cushman asked how many roundabouts there were in the State of Minnesota. Scott Thompson noted there are more than 100 roundabouts in the State. Cushman asked how many traffic signals in the State.

Thompson estimated the number of traffic signals in the State would be in the thousands.

Cushman noted the discussion has been about the ease of convenience of getting traffic in and out of the area. He said there are nine businesses on the west side of Highway 71 who are concerned about traffic flow in and out of their businesses. He asked if the roundabout would enhance access to their businesses, or does it just make it easy to slow traffic down. Cushman asked what the plan was regarding traffic access to businesses.

Bower commented that in terms of getting into those businesses, really nothing will change with a roundabout. He pointed to the concept drawing on display for the Mayor, Council and audience. Bower said one option would be a right turn with a slip ramp in and out making access even easier than it is today. He said as far as making a left hand turn, according to future 25 to 30 year projected traffic volumes, there will be so much traffic on Highway 71, it will be difficult to find gaps to turn onto the highway. Bower said the roundabout will slow traffic down and will create gaps to allow motorists to turn off and onto Highway 71. He said not only is MnDOT looking at what will work for today, but is also planning for the future development and what will work 20 years from now.

Scott Thompson of MnDOT said the roundabout for northbound traffic on Highway 71 will facilitate motorists being able to access businesses on the west side of the highway instead of waiting in the left hand turn lane waiting for a green arrow signal. Thompson said it's his perspective that the roundabout would enhance access to the businesses on the west side of the highway.

Bern asked where traffic would begin to be slowed down on Highway 71 in both the north and southbound lanes.

Thompson explained traffic would be slowed down approximately 1,000 feet north of the roundabout. He said there would be warning signs posted informing motorists that they should approach the intersection between 15 to 20 miles per hour. Thompson added that typically for new roundabout installations, MnDOT has actually equipped the warning signs with LED flashing lights to draw attention that motorists are approaching a roundabout and what the speed should be travelling through the roundabout.

Cushman asked what the speed would be south of the roundabout.

Thompson said the speed limit south of the roundabout is really “open”. He said MnDOT is changing the character of Highway 71 south of the roundabout substantially. Thompson said MnDOT is looking to see what motorists think the appropriate speed should be. He said after the project is completed, studies of the speed and traffic volumes will be conducted to determine what the appropriate speed limit really should be.

Bower said a reduction in speed would be expected from what the current speeds are because of the change in the nature of the road.

Thompson said the roundabout is going to facilitate slowing traffic down because traffic is coming out of the intersection 15 to 20 miles per hour.

Cushman asked if a similar design of the roundabout proposed for the intersection of Highway 71 and Industrial Parkway has ever been built before, or if each roundabout has its own design.

Bower explained the roundabouts are not a “cookie cutter” solution. He said each roundabout needs to be tailored to each specific location and the vehicles. Bower said that’s not a bad thing against roundabouts. He said MnDOT takes care in designing the roundabouts and designs each one to the specific location.

Cushman referred to the comments at the question and answer session earlier in the evening regarding flaws in the roundabouts in Worthington and asked if MnDOT had the opportunity, would they do them over again.

Thompson said MnDOT would do minor tweaks to them.

Cushman asked when the roundabout is installed in Jackson, what tweaks will be done to this one.

Thompson responded by saying MnDOT built roundabouts in Mankato and thus far, after watching them operate for four months, “we haven’t seen any tweaks that we would make”. He said there is an example of two roundabout intersections that have the traffic volumes “that we’re roughly talking about 20 years in the future here for Jackson and again, based upon those operations, 30,000 plus cars a day through each intersection, we haven’t seen any significant modifications needed”.

Bern asked if that also included big trucks going through those roundabouts.

Thompson responded “yes” it did and he actually watched a half a manufactured home hauled through the roundabout a couple of days ago. He said not only are unique loads going through the roundabout intersections, but it’s a heavy commercial district in Mankato that is receiving deliveries on a very, very frequent basis.

Cushman asked what the options are.

Bower said MnDOT would ask the Council to consider if they would like to move ahead with the roundabout at the intersection of Highway 71 and Industrial Parkway. He said if not, as far as the traffic study is concerned, MnDOT has not found any other good options at that location to accommodate future growth. Bower said the traffic signal would have more delays and a higher number of crashes. He said the interchange originally looked at did not have enough volumes of traffic to support it, “so really, based on the outcome of this traffic study, it didn’t identify any alternatives that MnDOT can do to improve access to facilitate future growth”. He said he doesn’t know if there is another option at this point. Bower said MnDOT hasn’t identified any other alternatives.

Finck inquired what if the City Council doesn’t move forward with the project.

Cushman said the matter could be tabled for two weeks.

Bower said if the Council wanted to have two weeks to look at it, MnDOT is confident that in two weeks they could come back and provide enough information for a decision to be made.

CUSHMAN/FINCK moved and it was unanimously carried to table a decision regarding the roundabout at the intersection of Highway 71 and Industrial Parkway until the Council’s January 27, 2015 meeting.

Bower thanked the Mayor and City Council for their consideration.

Mayor Walter thanked Bower and MnDOT officials for attending the meeting.

SUSAN REITER OF COFFEE CHOICES: DISCUSS ELIMINATING THE TWO HOUR PARKING LIMIT IN THE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT

Susan Reiter said she has had her business, Coffee Choices, for exactly five years. She noted one of the problems that’s been a constant issue is the two hour parking limit downtown. She said she understands the incentive and reasoning, but doesn’t think the parking limit is relevant anymore.

Reiter said what she thinks we are doing is telling customers that if they come downtown, “get your stuff and get out”. She said she thinks it’s time to change that. Reiter pointed out that Wal-Mart or the Malls don’t have parking limits, so why is Jackson doing that. She said we’re not inviting people to come down and shop and go to more than one place. Reiter pointed out that if a person comes downtown to get their hair styled, they could easily be parked downtown for two or three hours already. She said she realized there has been some friction between a couple of the business owners, some of it pretty intense, but she said that is something they are going to have to work out amongst themselves and focus on something different than what other businesses are doing. Reiter said she thinks the parking needs to be opened up and knows there will be a lot of discussion that will need to happen, but would like to get that conversation started.

Cushman asked Reiter if she was looking for any sort of parking limit.

Reiter said no, she wants the parking wide open.

Cushman asked about what if a renter above one of the downtown businesses parks their vehicle on Main Street and it stays there taking up valuable parking space.

Reiter said that would be something the landlord would need to specifically address. She said there are ways to handle that on an individual basis that just involves having a conversation, about being respectful and about doing the right thing. Reiter said there will be some that abuse it occasionally, but she thinks the majority of people are going to be reasonable. She said when the issues are addressed because of a few people, it hurts the majority and “what are we gaining?”. Reiter said “we are not being welcoming as a business community down there by limiting our parking time”. She said she could understand if the City wants to limit parking in certain areas overnight and there could be ways to address that. However, Reiter said having a two hour, or even four hour parking limit is not inviting someone to park downtown and visit different businesses. She said parking was also issue on the morning of January 6, 2015 because of a snow removal issue. Reiter explained she and her staff arrive at her business at 5:30 a.m. and park directly in front or next to it in the morning for safety reasons. She said their vehicles are then moved before the other businesses start opening.

Reiter said when one of her employees went to move her car to the City parking lot after 8 a.m., the City lot was not completely cleared of snow. She said the employee had to use her four-wheel drive pickup to travel through the lot to find a parking spot among the few spots that hadn't already been taken. Reiter said there are multiple issues that need to be addressed. She said "we're not welcoming downtown".

Temple said in reviewing the Sheriff's report regarding parking violations; he doesn't remember ever seeing a violation noted for going over the two hour limit on Main Street.

Reiter said violations are rarely enforced until someone makes a complaint. But, she said when that occurs she has observed it clears out downtown. Reiter said she understands the Sheriff's Department is doing their job responding to a complaint and she is not upset with them. She said the two hour limit will not take care of issues that are going on downtown anyway. Reiter commented she thinks the two hour parking limit is using law enforcement's time and resources for something that they could be using for something much better.

Mayor Walter said Reiter brought up a downtown problem that needs to be openly discussed. He said he didn't think the Council could make a decision on anything at this time.

Reiter said she did not expect a decision and just wanted to bring the issue up for the conversation to start.

Mayor Walter asked if she had brought the issue to the Chamber of Commerce to go around and talk with the businesses.

Reiter said a couple of the businesses that are having issues with each other are not members of the Chamber. She added she didn't think that was the Chamber's job to do that.

Mayor Walter suggested it may be a place to start.

Reiter said the two hour parking limit is an issue that periodically comes up in conversation at times among other business owners or her customers. She said the issue appears to come up more in the winter.

Bern said he was glad Reiter brought the issue to the Council, but as Council representatives it's difficult for the Council to make a good legitimate decision on what's best for Jackson based on hearing from only one business. He said it's an issue that should go before the Chamber of Commerce.

Bern said he would like to see more businesses come to the City Council meeting to outline what they would like to see. He said he would like to rather see the majority tell the Council what they want and need for the City of Jackson than just one business.

Reiter agreed with Bern and said her intentions were to get the discussion started and did not expect the City Council to make an immediate decision.

Mayor Walter asked Reiter if she would be willing to chair a committee on the issue.

Reiter said she did not want to chair a committee but would be happy to discuss the issue with anybody, or to host a discussion on the issue.

Mayor Walter suggested that somebody needs to organize a group and bring what the downtown businesses would like to the City Council at a future meeting.

Reiter asked exactly what the Council is looking for, or what would help them.

Bern responded saying if there are 13 businesses downtown and 10 of them come before the Council and say they would like to have the two hour parking limit removed because they feel it hinders their business and possible sale of merchandise. He said that would tell the Council that they have the support of downtown businesses united together that want that done. Bern said a decision cannot be made on just one request from a single business.

Finck suggested a petition or getting what the consensus is of the business community on Main Street. He said Main Street is the only restricted area with the two hour parking limit and understands Reiter's concerns.

Reiter thanked the Mayor and Council for hearing her concerns.

Mayor Walter thanked Reiter for attending the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

City Administrator Bromeland said City Attorney Handevitd had recommended changing the wording on Consent Agenda item 6(H)(B) regarding the annual charge of \$1.00 per foot for companies to pertain to not only installing fiber optic cable, but to be for "utility infrastructure not owned by the City" whether it be for pipe or cable etc.

CUSHMAN/TEMPLE moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the Consent Agenda with the wording changes for Consent Agenda Item 6(H)(B).

COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS

MOVE THE SECOND REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING FROM JANUARY 20 TO TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2015 AT 6:30 P.M.

Mayor Walter said due to a scheduling conflict he has, he would like to move the January 20th Council meeting to January 27th, 2015.

TEMPLE/BERN moved and it was unanimously carried to move the January 20th regular City Council meeting to January 27th, 2015 at 6:30 P.M.

SECOND READING AND APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE NO. 83 – FEES, RATES AND CHARGES FOR 2015

City Administrator Bromeland said after a discussion with City Attorney Handevidt, it was requested to strike the wording regarding the \$1.00 per foot annual fee for installing utility infrastructure not owned by the City since it was not included in the introduction of the Ordinance on December 16, 2014. She said it could be added to the fee schedule as an amendment at a later time.

Cushman also asked if the wording regarding the sidewalk display permit fee of \$15 per year would also be struck from Ordinance No. 83.

Bromeland said it would.

BERN/HANDEVIDT moved and it was unanimously carried to adopt Ordinance No. 83 – fees, rates and charges for 2015.

ELECTION OF MAYOR PRO TEM

Mayor Walter said he would like to appoint Councilman Fred Bern as Mayor Pro Tem for 2015. Mayor Walter said he spoke with Bern earlier in the week and Bern accepted his request.

FINCK/TEMPLE moved and it was unanimously carried to appoint Councilman Fred Bern as Mayor Pro Tem for 2015.

OTHER:

Bern thanked Bromeland for the great annual informational newsletter that's was included in the City's utility bills informing the public of what's going on in the City of Jackson.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, BERN/HANDEVIDT moved and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

David A. Maschoff, Council Secretary

