

Jackson, Minnesota
April 7, 2020

The Jackson City Council met in regular session in the Council Chambers of City Hall and also by teleconference at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7, 2020 with the meeting called to order by Mayor Wayne Walter. On the roll call, the following persons were present, Mayor Wayne Walter, Aldermen Larry Anderson, Brandon Finck, Donnie Schoenrock and Dave Cushman and joining by teleconference call were Aldermen Matt Madden, Jeffrey Gay and City Attorney Brad Anderson. Also present in the Council Chambers were City Administrator Matt Skaret, Jackson County Sheriff Shawn Haken, City Clerk/Council Secretary Dave Maschoff and Dave Schmidt of KKOJ/KUXX Radio and also joining by video conference call was Auditor Layne Kockelman of the Auditing and Accounting Firm of Abdo, Eick and Meyers of Mankato, Minnesota, Community and Business Development Specialist Thomas Nelson of Community and Economic Development Associates (CEDA) and Justin Lessman of the Jackson County Pilot. (A quorum of the City Council was present.)

CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Wayne Walter called the regular meeting of the Jackson City Council to order. He noted Aldermen Larry Anderson, Brandon Finck, Donnie Schoenrock and Dave Cushman were present in the Council Chambers and Aldermen Matt Madden and Jeffrey Gay were present via conference call.

There were no Public Hearings, Bid Lettings or Open Forum.

CONSENT AGENDA

SCHOENROCK/ANDERSON moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Unscheduled Guests:

Mayor Walter asked if there were any unscheduled guests in the audience.

There were no unscheduled guests at the meeting.

Seeing none, Mayor Walter said the Council would proceed with the Council Discussion Items.

Council Discussion Items

AUDIT REPORT FOR 2019 BY ABDO, EICK AND MEYERS

Layne Kockelman of the auditing and accounting firm of Abdo, Eick and Meyers was present at the City Council meeting via video conference call to present the City's audit report for 2019.

Kockelman presented a power point presentation of the City of Jackson's 2019 Financial Statement Audit on the City Council Chamber's Smart Screen. He detailed the audit results of the City's general fund, other governmental funds and enterprise funds. Kockelman said overall, the City's financial status is strong across the board.

Kockelman also fielded questions from Councilmembers regarding the City's financial status and bond ratings pertaining to planning for future projects. Kockelman suggested the City develop a long-term plan to determine when projects could be pursued by the City financially. He invited Mayor Walter and the Councilmembers to contact him anytime if they have questions.

Kockelman thanked Mayor Walter and the City Council. He also thanked City Administrator Matt Skaret and the City Hall Office Staff for their assistance in providing information for the audit.

Skaret thanked Kockelman and his staff for their work and cooperation on the 2019 audit.

Mayor Walter also thanked Kockelman for his report to the Council.

SPLASHPAD RAINWATER DIVERTER SYSTEM QUOTE

Skaret said it's been discussed in the past that the splashpad would need what is called a rainwater diverter to divert storm water from the splashpad when it rains. He said the way the splashpad was originally designed, the rainwater was intended to go down the storm drains and fill up the water tank for the splashpad. Skaret said when the water tank would fill to a certain level, then the tank would overflow into the sanitary sewer system. He explained that's exactly what the City has been trying not to do. Skaret said the City is trying to get clean rainwater out of the sanitary sewer system and not put more into it.

Skaret said what's needed is known as a rainwater diverter that would divert the overflow water to a pipe. He explained the pipe would transport the water to the nearest storm sewer which is about 180 feet away. Skaret said the City finally received an official quote for a rainwater diverter system. He said the quote was \$11,800 plus \$1,635 for freight for the actual rainwater diverter plus \$5,000 for installation for a total of \$18,435. He said there still needs to be a quote sought for boring the line in. Skaret said it was believed a local contractor would be cheaper than the general contractor for the splashpad.

Cushman noted the City is asking their residents to not put rainwater into the City's sanitary sewer system, so the City can't be guilty of doing that either.

Skaret said the City can't tell residents to not put rainwater into the sanitary sewer and then the City do it themselves.

Cushman said he thinks it's important that message gets delivered.

Alderman Anderson asked if Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough and the Water Department staff could install the system.

Skaret said they could not.

SCHOENROCK/CUSHMAN moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the proposal from Commercial Recreation Specialists for the installation of a Rainwater Diverter System for the Splashpad.

2020 STREET PROJECT UPDATE

Skaret reported he spoke with Engineer Greg Mitchell of Bolton and Menk on April 7th. He said Mitchell has the plans for the 2020 street project on his desk. Skaret said work has been slowed down because many of Bolton and Menk's staff have been working at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Skaret said he would like to have a meeting with Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough, Street Superintendent Phil Markman, MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Jeremy Boogerd, Engineer Greg Mitchell and himself and go over the latest version of the plans. He said he would then like to have a Street Committee meeting on April 13th or 14th to take another look at the plans before they are brought to the City Council on April 21st for final approval and authorization to go out for bids.

Skaret noted there are about 122 sheets to the 2020 Street Project plans.

Cushman and Schoenrock asked if they could receive copies of the plans before the Street Committee meets.

Skaret said he could provide the plans ahead of the meeting.

Cushman, Schoenrock and Alderman Anderson said they all felt comfortable in meeting at City Hall for a Street Committee meeting.

Skaret said the Street Committee could meet at 5:15 p.m. on Tuesday, April 14th at City Hall.

Cushman, Schoenrock and Alderman Anderson, all members of the Street Committee, agreed to meet on April 14th at City Hall.

Skaret said if everything goes as scheduled, plans are to go out for bids and do a portion of North Highway this year. He said it will be a two-year project costing approximately \$5.5 million. Skaret said the plan is still to do at least a part of North Highway this year doing the water main replacement, storm sewer, streets, curb and gutter and get the first layer of asphalt applied. He pointed out there will need to be some construction phasing, especially on North Highway, with the hospital, school and the residents.

Cushman noted the project will move forward based on favorable bids.

Skaret concurred with Cushman that the project will proceed if favorable bids are received. He said the bids that Bolton and Menk have been receiving for other projects so far have not been favorable. Skaret said that's largely because there have been a lot of different things going on. He noted there have been wet summers and falls the last two years so construction seasons have had a late start and ended early because of the weather so contractors are backed up. Skaret said because the 2020 Street Project will be a later summer or fall project, it may make a difference with contractors. He said it's all speculation until the bids are actually submitted.

APPROVE REVOLVING LOAN FUND APPLICATIONS

Skaret said the Finance Committee met on April 6th to review Revolving Loan Fund applications. He said the 20-year loans are for up to \$15,000 for qualified expenses at zero percent interest with payments delayed for 180 days.

Skaret said there was a lot of interest in the Emergency Assistance Revolving Loan Fund Program. He said there are a lot of businesses that are in need. Skaret pointed out the applicants as listed on the City Council's agenda that the Finance Committee has recommended for Council approval. He noted additional follow-up information is being provided for a few more applications that have been submitted. Skaret said those applications may come before the City Council for approval at a future meeting.

Skaret said there have been other Executive Orders that were issued by the Governor that are resulting in the closure or severe limitation of other businesses. He said there are funds that are still available to be loaned out. Skaret said the Finance Committee recommended amending the Program guidelines for other businesses to participate.

Skaret the applications before the City Council are the first round of businesses that were affected by the Governor's Executive Order 20-04 which included restaurants, bars, fitness centers, hair salons and spas. He said the second round of loan applicants will be those businesses affected by the Governor's second Executive Order.

Cushman said businesses that didn't qualify for the loan program during the first round may now qualify in the second round due to the Governor's new round of restrictions.

Mayor Walter said two motions are needed from the City Council. He said one motion would be to approve the first round of applications for the Small Business Emergency Assistance Revolving Loans and a second motion to amend the loan guidelines for those businesses that are now eligible to apply due to the Governor's latest Executive Order.

Attorney Anderson asked if all the businesses that applied for loans in the first round are affected by the Governor's Executive Order 20-04.

Finck said they were all affected.

Mayor Walter noted the Finance Committee reviewed the applications to verify that they were all affected by the Governor's Executive Order 20-04.

Mayor Walter asked for a motion.

ANDERSON/CUSHMAN moved and it was carried to approve the first-round list of Small Business Emergency Assistance Revolving Loan applications up to this point.

Aldermen voting in favor of the motion included Aldermen Larry Anderson, Dave Cushman, Matt Madden and Jeffrey Gay.

Aldermen abstaining included Aldermen Brandon Finck and Donnie Schoenrock.

Mayor Walter then asked for a motion to amend the loan program guidelines to also include businesses that are now affected by all the Governor's Executive Orders.

FINCK/SCHOENROCK moved and it was unanimously carried to amend the Small Business Emergency Assistance Revolving Loan Program guidelines to include businesses that are now affected by all the Governor's Executive Orders pertaining to Covid-19.

BOARD OF EQUALIZATION MEETING ON APRIL 13TH AT 6 P.M.

With everything going on with the Covid-19 pandemic, Skaret said the County Assessor's Office is planning to hold the Board of Equalization meeting virtually on April 13th. He asked the Mayor and City Council if they would like to keep the same format having those that want to come to City Hall meet and those that aren't comfortable or unable to attend in person to join the meeting by telephone.

Mayor Walter and Councilmembers said they had no problem conducting the meeting in person or by telephone.

Skaret noted at least one Councilmember that's been certified for the Board of Appeals and Equalization has to be in attendance at the meeting.

PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKS

Skaret said there was a lot of confusion regarding playgrounds and parks after the Governor's Stay-at-Home Order. He explained it was not explicit in the Governor's Order itself that playgrounds and parks be closed. Skaret said the Governor was actually encouraging people to get out and exercise, walk and just not congregate in large groups and practice social distancing.

But Skaret explained on the flyer the Governor's Office circulated, it had a list of things that were closed and on that list was playgrounds. He said over the week, the City had to hurry up and erect signs saying that the playgrounds were closed. Skaret said then there was some clarification from the Governor's Office that arrived early the following week saying that playgrounds are not on the list of closures and it was up to each individual City to make that determination. He said there were some comments on the City's Facebook page about whether the parks and playgrounds should be closed. Skaret said there were some concerns about the playground equipment because the City doesn't have the manpower to sanitize the playground equipment every two hours. He said there were also some concerns about the basketball courts in the parks when there are games of basketball going on. Skaret said often times social distancing is not occurring.

Skaret said it becomes an enforcement issue on a lot of these concerns.

Sheriff Shawn Haken said the Sheriff's Office has received plenty of phone calls on all of those items outlined by Skaret as have law enforcement agencies in other communities across the State. He said they have also received phone calls about people on the golf course. Haken said there's a lot of confusion regarding all those locations.

Regarding parks, Haken said the Sheriff's Department has checked with other communities to see what they have done. He said for the most part, communities have left their parks open although some communities have closed the actual playground sets.

Haken said the Sheriff's Department participates in daily emails at least once a day along with two to three statewide conference calls. He explained the conference calls serve two purposes. Haken said the calls provide information to the Governor's Office of what's going well and what isn't, what's come up that nobody had thought about and guidance from the Governor's Office.

Haken said the golf course question is a hot topic across the State. He said there are some good arguments for and against opening or keeping the golf courses closed. Haken said there's probably more arguments in favor of having the golf courses open. He said the golf club house has to remain closed. Haken said the question has been whether people can just golf on their own or exercise. He said apparently in some communities people are using the golf course as a park and are just exercising. Haken said all those questions are getting forwarded to the State.

Haken said the Sheriff's Department has been told for the past five or six days that the Governor has the golf course issue among the top two or three questions to get addressed. He said information regarding golf courses is anticipated to arrive any day.

Haken said the Sheriff's Department was told by the State to basically keep the peace and they'll decide what to do regarding golf courses. He said there's no doubt the club house will remain closed just like the restaurants. Haken said everyone is still awaiting a decision regarding golf courses from the Governor's Office.

Haken said the Governor's Office has stressed to every Sheriff's Department and Police Department in the State to not issue citations on any of this stuff except in extreme cases.

Haken said the Sheriff's Department has received calls and complaints about people on the golf course, kids playing in the parks, people walking too close on the trails and people demanding to know why certain businesses on the Industrial Parkway are exempt from being closed. Haken said there were some 911 systems in certain Sheriff's Offices in the State that were overwhelmed with phone calls regarding social distancing questions or complaints. He said now the State has set up a hotline number that people can call with those issues which has taken a lot of pressure off the Sheriff's Departments because the Governor needs to decide on all of these things.

Haken said this is all uncharted territory. He said there are a lot of arguments for and against the closing and stay at home orders. Haken said the Governor's Office is going to decide when things open up and hopefully, in particular, decide the question about golf courses.

Finck said hopefully there will be some clarity when Governor Walz gives an update on April 8th.

Skaret asked Mayor Walter and the City Council what they would like to do regarding playgrounds and parks.

It was the consensus of the City Council to keep the parks and playgrounds open and to ask people to be patient, be careful and use common sense.

Cushman said people need to respect the person around you. He said you might be OK but the person next to you might not be. Cushman said that's what we're losing sight of.

AGREEMENT FOR ASSESSOR SERVICES

Skaret explained the five-year contract for assessor services from Jackson County expires on June 30th. He said there is another proposed five-year agreement starting on July 1st, 2020 and ending on June 30th, 2025. Skaret pointed out there's not much change regarding the fee structure in the new proposed contract.

CUSHMAN/SCHOENROCK moved and it was unanimously carried to approve a new agreement with Jackson County for Assessor Services for the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2025.

Other:

Alderman Donnie Schoenrock

Schoenrock thanked the Finance Committee for all their time and work in developing the Small Business Emergency Assistance Revolving Loan Program for businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic. He said there are a lot of unknowns and this program is a really good way to get money to our local businesses fast. Schoenrock said he wanted to thank the Finance Committee members. He said businesses really, really need the help and said the Emergency Assistance Revolving Loan Program was a really, really good idea. Schoenrock said local businesses appreciate the program.

Skaret said the loans have been approved and the City wants to get those funds distributed quickly. He said Economic Development Coordinator Tom Nelson will be meeting with the business owners on April 8th to get paperwork signed and notarized. Skaret said the plan is to issue a check once the paperwork is signed.

Nelson said he would be meeting with businesses and issue the funds once the paperwork is signed. He said businesses appreciate the simplicity of the loan application forms and definitely a lot of people are being affected. Nelson thanked the Finance Committee for their support.

Alderman Brandon Finck

Finck echoed Schoenrock's comments. He said the simplicity of the City's Emergency Assistance Revolving Loan Program in comparison with the State and Federal assistance programs has been greatly appreciated. Finck said the application forms have been easy to navigate. He noted the swiftness that the program has been developed and implemented has been huge and greatly appreciated by the business owners he's talked to. Finck said it's making a huge impact on our community and a quick impact which is what was needed. He said there's definitely been a lot of good positives.

Skaret said he wanted to say hats off to the City Council and the Finance Committee and to the business owners. He said there are a lot of towns that are doing similar emergency assistance programs with their revolving loans but what he's seen anecdotally is that the other towns' programs are not as comprehensive as the City of Jackson's. Skaret said the other towns' loan programs are for a smaller dollar amount with repayment over a shorter period of time. Skaret said he may be bias, but said the City of Jackson's Emergency Assistance Revolving Loan Program is the best from what he's seen anecdotally.

Cushman said it sounds like we did what we set out to do. He said that's the bottom line, that was the goal.

Mayor Walter thanked the work of the Finance Committee. He also pointed out Skaret, Nelson and City Attorney Anderson put a lot of work into getting the program together and organized. He said the hats need to go off to Skaret, Nelson and Attorney Anderson.

Finck noted the Finance Committee taxed Skaret, Nelson and Attorney Anderson pretty hard and gave them very short deadlines and they succeeded in that.

City Administrator Matt Skaret regarding City Operations during Covid-19 Pandemic

Skaret said he wanted to update the Mayor and City Council regarding City operations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Skaret explained last week the City began split teams for their Water, Sewer and Street Departments. He noted MRES personnel have been working in split shifts for the past couple of weeks.

Skaret said the Street Department personnel are basically split in half. He explained half of the personnel are at work one week while the other half is at home. Skaret said then the next week, the teams switch with each other. He said the Water Department is also following the same schedule to ensure the continuity of City operations. He said there's always the risk of having a whole City Department go down or be exposed. Skaret said the City has to keep the water pumping, sewers flowing, the streets operable and the electricity on. He said the split teams is what the City has to do to maintain operations.

Skaret reported the Liquor Store started with curbside delivery only on April 1st and also shortened their hours of operation to 12 noon to 7 p.m.

Alderman Anderson asked how the changes at the Liquor Store have been going.

Skaret said the changes have been going well for the most part. He said customers are starting to get use to it. Skaret noted it's a lot of work for the Liquor Store staff. He said it's more labor intensive but it does keep the public out of the store and reduces the risk of infections.

At City Hall, Skaret said the doors continue to be locked. He noted Economic Development Coordinator Tom Nelson and Economic Development Office Administrative Assistant Trish Porter have been working remotely from home. Skaret said Nelson stops into the Economic Development Office maybe once a day to check the mail and messages but otherwise is working at home most of the time.

Skaret said the entire staff at City Hall have all been working in the office. He said that's kind of on a day-by-day basis. Skaret said the City Hall Staff has had preliminary conversations about splitting staff time. He said he doesn't foresee exercising that unless Jackson County gets a larger outbreak of the coronavirus. Skaret said so far, everything has been going well.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Walter entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

SCHOENROCK/ANDERSON moved and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the City Council meeting at 7:50 p.m.

David A. Maschoff, Council Secretary

Wayne Walter, Mayor

